



# NEWORLD

Fall 2020 | Saint Louis University



RECOVERY & THE AMERICAN DREAM



VOLUME 18, ISSUE 1

## OneWorld Magazine

Fall 2020

### **Beatrice Beirne**

Editor-in-Chief

Section Editor, staff writer

Designer: Cardakli, Mustafic, Sanapti, P. Shah, Kadiwala

### **Lexi Kayser**

Copy Editor, Section Editor,

Staff Writer

### **Dhvanii Raval**

Section Editor, Staff Writer

### **Karan Modi**

Section Editor, staff writer

### **Alexis Guffey**

Section Editor, staff writer

### **Claire Heggie**

Section Editor, staff writer

### **Meha Patel**

Section Editor, staff writer

### **Priya Shah**

Section Editor, staff writer

### **Lillian Adams**

Section Editor, staff writer

### **Ava Gagner**

Section Editor, staff writer

### **Abby Kwon**

Creative Director,

Designer: Firdaus, Heggie, Karthikeyan, Sahai

### **Sanjott Singh**

Assistant Creative Director,

Designer: Cover concept, Raval, Seyer, R. Shah

### **Jennifer Smith**

Designer: Cover, Beirne,  
Chiodo, Hamby

### **Matteo Chan**

Designer: Hall, Joseph

### **Blair Valdes**

Designer: Guffey, Henn,  
Mac Laughlin

### **Zoha Ahmed**

Designer:  
Adnan, Rajalaksmi

### **Anagha Arla**

Designer: Arla, A. Patel,  
Parikh

### **Lindsay Bagley**

Designer: Keller, Makhoul,  
C. Simon

### **Madeline Hammell**

Designer: Gagner, Hunt,  
Manivannan

### **Maddy Joplin**

Designer: Kayser,  
McLean,

### **Caroline McCool**

Designer: George, LFE,  
Back Cover

### **Waghar Osmun**

Designer: Hill,  
Lund-Molfese, Siddiqua

### **Amreen Sauji**

Designer: Bassi, I. Simon

### **Angelina White**

Designer: Adams, M.  
Patel, Prible

### **Jessica Henn**

Finance Chair,  
Section Editor, Staff Writer

### **Pranjali Rajalaksmi**

Publicity and Outreach,  
Staff Writer

### **Morgan Kelly**

Event Coordinator,  
Section Editor

### **Lauren Hamby**

Assistant Finance Chair,  
Staff Writer



Visit our website!

### **Supriya Ellina**

Assistant Event  
Coordinator



# Letter from the Editors

## Dear Reader,

I found myself recycling a phrase frequently during this editing session; there will always be another poetic phrase to include, always another study that would further your point, always another anecdote that could be shined upon. That doesn't diminish the quality of your work on the page.

These creators have been a tenacious bunch, always trying to overstuff articles like clothes in a carry-on. We find ourselves fretting a lot about whether we've done enough, included everything or covered all we can. We crescendo between pride in our work and pessimism in its limitations. We curse word counts—knowing they can't quite fight back. I find this analogous to the state of our Union. There will never be a battle finished nor a mission complete, however this does not undermine our integrity to fight, our eagerness to correct or willingness to investigate our most in ourselves.

In this edition of OneWorld Magazine, promisingly titled "Recovery & the American Dream," we dive into worlds we've never known, considering the nation's culture of care and international identity, among a verbosity of other things. But we also buckled ourselves down in worlds we knew all too well. Writers and designers depicted a challenging transition in education during COVID-19, frustration with individualist precaution responses and evolutions in virtual advocacy.

We found, by no coincidence, as we wrote this semester, that Black women appeared with purposeful consistency across our articles. We talked about their disproportionate maternal mortality rates and the policing and microaggressions they endure at school. We examined how trans women who are Black have been focal to our understanding of health care during pandemics. We grappled with their leadership in faith and subjection to human trafficking, their agency in history classes and autonomy in the medical field. We witnessed their prominence in the Black working class and absence in the billionaire one. We saw plurality and predictability, whether discussing Black female soldiers, students or Senators who went on to be Vice Presidents.

The non-negotiable fact of modern social justice is that Black women are simultaneously murdered, abused and betrayed by a society that praises them. We wish with all our hearts that the words of Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks and Angela Davis—whose theories we seem to cycle every semester—would manifest in the world around us. We would love to live in a world where "matter" wasn't a political statement. We write like tomorrow will be a better day, and hope our words have some effect on the injustices we research.

We, as a nation seeking to recover that American dream, are indebted to the Black women—who started Stonewall and shot astronauts into space; who are janitors, journalists and judges. Who are billionaires and broken inside; who have magic and make change. We are indebted to those whose scholarship orient the way we see the world. Who get cut off in class. Who are sleeping EMTs and saw no justice.

Who are driving. Who are shopping. Who are outside with their children. Who are unheard. Who are sick and strong, sober and steadfast. Who we don't learn enough about in class, but witness the majesty of every day. Who we feel too

comfortable ventriloquizing through gifs online, without paying mind to the abundance Black female creators needing work right now. She is more than our best friend or classmate—she is a human for whom the system was not written. Stop saying Black women will save the world and start certifying that Black women are seen fully first.

You cannot peacefully live in a world where white supremacy and Black Lives Matter coexist. That's not possible. If you avow the virtues of Black life, you must condemn the vice of racism loudly, frequently and even when it's challenging. Complacency with racism is antithetical to the American Dream, yet very much synonymous with the America that built that dream. Recovery is waking up from a dream that never really "was."

This isn't the time for performative ethics, black squares or virtue signaling. This is the time to correct the wrongs you've spent too long ignoring, to honor the Black females who you've boosted yourself up upon. We have to look to the unmatched tacticality of Stacey Abrams, who trail-blazed enfranchisement in Georgia, and the bravery of the Black females who lead protests on our own campus. Black lives matter. Black women matter. Black girls matter. Black trans lives matter. Black thoughts and feelings matter. Black convicts matter, Black votes matter, Black pain matters, Black prosperity matters.

We dealt with a lot of pain, discomfort and truth during this semester's production process—the first two often irremovable from the latter. We hope you find those truths in this issue, as well as inclination to action and argument. From broad strokes to baby steps, this was a patchwork project of the American dream and experience. We hope you add a stitch.

On behalf of OneWorld,

Beatrice Beirne, Editor-in-Chief



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| The Kids Aren't Alright                                                        | 1  |
| This is What Democracy Looks Like                                              | 3  |
| Examining a World Leader in Health Disparities                                 | 5  |
| American Autonomy: The Truth About Our Bodies in Medicine                      | 7  |
| Beyond the Box Office: What the Hamilton Film Does for Theatre Accessibility   | 8  |
| Busting the Myth of Model Minority                                             | 9  |
| Medicare for Who? How Drawing Districts Determines Health                      | 11 |
| Can We Do It? Wartime and Pandemic Propoganda                                  | 13 |
| Recruiting Racism: The Reality of Greek Life                                   | 15 |
| Eat the Rich: Billionaires and the American Dream                              | 17 |
| The Macro Problem of Microaggressions in Education                             | 19 |
| Dear Privileged People... You Have to Look Around                              | 21 |
| Is Cancel Culture Cancelled?                                                   | 23 |
| Getting the Second Marshmallow: Public Health, Marginization, and the Pandemic | 25 |
| Key to Surviving 2020? Education.                                              | 27 |
| Self Learning in Schooling: Does the Good Outweigh the Bad?                    | 29 |
| Human Connection In Times of Chaos                                             | 31 |
| The Search for Community Among COVID-19                                        | 33 |
| The Impact of COVID-19 and a Growing Need for Financial Security               | 35 |
| Here, Queer and Sick: The Effects of COVID-19 on the LGBTQ+ Community          | 37 |
| One Nation, under Which God?                                                   | 38 |



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|    |                                                                                          |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 39 | The National Pasttime                                                                    |
| 41 | POV: COVID-19 Intensifies the Delmar Divide for Healthcare                               |
| 43 | Bias in Discipline: Encouraging School Counselors to Incorporate Intersectional Thinking |
| 45 | Left Behind and Left to Die: Black Maternal Mortality                                    |
| 47 | The Indivisibility of the Human Spirit                                                   |
| 49 | The “Stay at Home” Order: Homelessness During COVID-era                                  |
| 50 | Uyghurs in China                                                                         |
| 51 | Has the American Promise Been Fulfilled?                                                 |
| 53 | From Founding to Anti-Racism: The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Christian America |
| 55 | “Normal” How Capitalism Sets Us Up to Fail                                               |
| 57 | South Asian Minority Voices Are Calling...But the West Isn't Picking Up                  |
| 59 | To First Generation Students Choosing What to Do Next...                                 |
| 61 | The COVID-19 Classroom and Unspoken Challenges in Special Education                      |
| 63 | “An Easier Kind of Change”: Incentivizing the Centering of the Black Working Class       |
| 65 | The Pandemic in the Shadows                                                              |
| 67 | Restoring Agency: How Reclaiming White-Washed Narratives Can Help Our Democracy          |
| 69 | Hobby Health: Caring for Yourself in a Pandemic                                          |
| 71 | White Washed Hinduism: A Guide to Appreciation, Not Appropriation of Other Cultures      |
| 73 | More Than the Battlefield: Fighting for a Country That Does Not Fight For You            |
| 75 | Education: The Great Equalizer                                                           |
| 77 | The Healthcare of Tomorrow, Today                                                        |

# THE KIDS AREN'T ALRIGHT

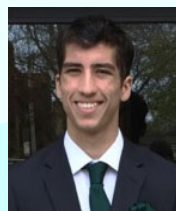
Teenagers often get told that we are “too young” for many things, to “leave it to the adults.” Most infuriating, is the idea that we are too young to understand politics and, by extension, too young to have opinions on it. The truth is, young people have been getting more involved in politics for a while now. They tried leaving it to the adults, and it wasn’t cutting it for them. Disillusioned with the way adults and older generations are handling their futures, growing portions of teenagers and Generation Z have decided to take matters into their own hands. After the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and action from officials was scarce, it was the students themselves who stepped up and began advocating for more restrictive gun laws.

Their movement, March for Our Lives, has become one of the most recognizable civilian organizations in today’s political scene. Greta Thurnberg was only 15 when she started striking for climate action and ignited the Fridays for Future movement, a global push for climate action led by students; she was only 16 when she became Time Magazine’s youngest “Person of the Year” in 2019.

Most recently, of course, it has been Gen Z leading the charge against systemic racism in the recent Black Lives Matter protests. Now, social media allows information to be spread further and more rapidly than ever before, and it has proved to be a valuable tool for activism.

Gen Z’s familiarity with technology and social media has put them at the helm of this ship, but the same qualities of social media that make it valuable and effective for activism create a perfect storm that online activists must quickly figure out how to weather; they must learn to navigate performative activism, social media bubbles and misinformation. While social media opens the door for teen activists to join forces with each other and advocate for the future, the dangers associated with it must be acknowledged and approached if progress is going to be made.

The 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests especially have been indicative of an increasing role of social media in activism and politics. Resource cards, stories of Black victims of police brutality going back many years and petitions demanding justice for those victims were all shared far and wide across every social media platform. Emails and call templates facilitated communication with elected officials. Education on how to be a good ally abounded. YouTube videos raised advertising money for BLM and other related charities, while celebrating Black creators. Protests were organized over social media,



**Alfredo Mac Laughlin**

He/Him

First-Year

Psychology

occurring in all 50 states and in several other countries—likely in large part due to social media awareness.

Social media even proved to fill in the gaps left by traditional media. Nowadays, almost everyone has a camera

on their phone at all times, thus an easy way to diffuse photos and videos taken at a moment’s notice. While the news networks seemed to favor the protests at which violence erupted and property was damaged, civilians used their phone cameras and social media to provide evidence that an overwhelming 93% of protests had been peaceful, according to a report done by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data. They documented when violence was purposefully incited by people intending to paint the protests in a bad light, and continued to document incidents of police brutality.

It was exciting to see the number of people showing up for the cause, more than I had seen post about any cause before. My excitement soon dimmed. It became apparent that many of those posting had no desire to bring about social change; rather, they saw it as an opportunity to increase their social status. Their activism was a performance. They did not care about helping people, only about appearing like they cared about it.

The same could be said about various companies that released statements that vaguely supported Black lives, carefully treading the centrist line in order to upset as few people as possible and avoid shrinking their client base. While performative activism is worthless, I would make the distinction that it is not meaningless. The fact that people now consider it a popular move to care about Black lives, and that companies feel financially pressured to show at least some support for Black lives, means that there has been a change in public opinion. It means that those of us fighting for real change are having an effect.

But those of us advocating over social media have to ask how far our reach really extends. When we post on social media, are our shouts going beyond those who share our beliefs? Or are we trapped in an algorithmic bubble,



preaching to those who have already converted? For evidence of a social media bubble, I have to look no further than my own sister. This past summer, in light of America's racial reckoning, many on social media denounced American Independence Day, under the idea that it celebrated freedom despite the fact that it did not offer freedom to the hundreds of enslaved peoples within our borders.

Liberal and socially conscious, my sister joined them. When July 4th rolled around, she was shocked to hear fireworks going off in our neighborhood. She had been so convinced by her own social media feed, that the day had been "cancelled." The algorithm had echoed her opinions back to her.

The blame does not fall exclusively on the algorithm. Shortly after the protests, I saw a post going around on many Instagram stories demanding that people unfollow if they held any of a subsequent list of beliefs, all on the conservative side of the American political spectrum. Such is the political polarization of the United States; tolerating someone who holds opinions you disagree with—particularly when those opinions are intolerant—comes too close to condoning their beliefs for comfort.

The political bubbles on social media, deliberate or otherwise, are being exploited by those seeking to spread misinformation. This is particularly present as the QAnon conspiracy theory emerges from the fringes and begins to move into the mainstream.

As explained by The New York Times, the conspiracy purports without evidence, that there is a cabal of satan-worshipping pedophiles that includes various government officials and A-list celebrities around the world, and that Donald Trump is the last line of defense against them, as well as having incorporated a variety of other conspiracy theories, both emerging ones and ones that have been around long before QAnon took shape. In the primary elections this past year, a handful of congressional candidates expressed open support for the conspiracy theory. One notable QAnon supporter, Representative-elect Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, briefly posted a picture on Facebook of herself holding a gun next to images of Ayanna Presley, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, four progressive congresswomen of color who are collectively referred to as "the Squad," along with a caption expressing the need to "go on the offensive against these socialists who want to rip our country apart," as reported by BuzzFeed.

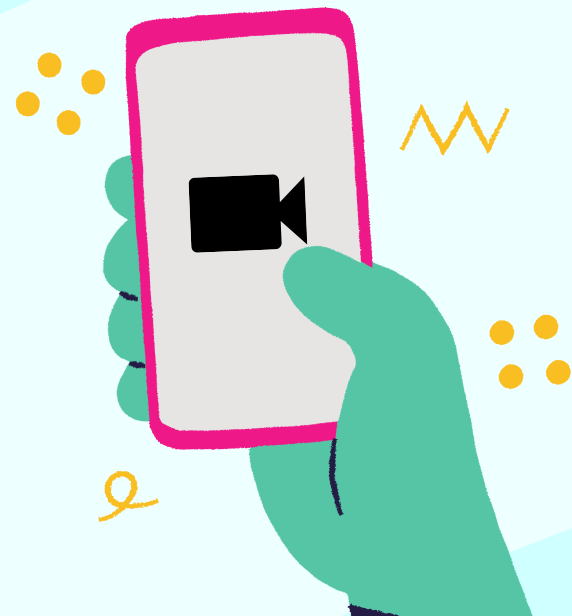
The extremity of the theory has people reasonably question how it managed to make it out of the darker corners of the internet. Ozy reports that with bubbles on social media, believers are able to grasp and spread specific aspects of the theory to vulnerable communities—who will spread it further despite being unaware of the full depth of the conspiracy.

And while the concept may seem outlandishly

far-fetched, it is already causing violence. A QAnon devotee was arrested in New York City with a dozen illegal knives after threatening to kill Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden on social media and live-streaming her trip from Illinois to New York, according to Daily Beast. The New York Times reports that the alleged murderer of a mob boss in New York was motivated by belief in the conspiracy and a desire to help the president, according to his lawyer. On many occasions, The Huffington Post has reported that the organization has interfered with legitimate FBI human-trafficking investigations. The FBI considers QAnon a terrorist threat.

I am one to say that the benefits of social media outweigh the disadvantages. But the disadvantages are not inevitable. Keep yourself informed and do your own responsible research. Misinformation in many cases can be disproved via a quick Google search. Social media and traditional news sources can and should be used in tandem to reveal a more accurate picture of the state of affairs. Seek out news sources that are reliable and relatively unbiased. The burden does not fall on our shoulders alone. In the 2016 election and throughout the following campaigning season, social media companies—Facebook in particular according to CNN—proved inept, at times even purposefully so, at managing disinformation. Social media sites need to be held accountable for halting the spread of fake news.

Pay attention to whether or not friends, celebrities and yourself follow through after social media posts and put words into action. The people in the streets chanting "Black lives matter" day after day need that action. They need to be seen, and they need to be heard—as a movement, a collective voice, "we the people." If the focus of a post is on how the individual is viewed, then it is just that: a performance. All this being said, your tools are at hand. They are flawed, but they are powerful. Let's get to work.





# THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE

Using one's voice is more important than ever.

There are a lot of things we cannot change, a lot of decisions that we cannot influence as residents in the United States. We have no control over who is nominated to the Supreme Court. We can share an Instagram post or go to a protest, but anything we do can easily be ignored; most of our actions are primarily for our own benefit, to make ourselves feel better.

Except for one thing: voting. There's an idea ingrained in a lot of people that their vote does not actually matter, that they are just a drop in the bucket. This. Is. Not. True. As protests across the country continue in force and the world struggles to cope with the lingering pandemic, it is becoming more common to hear people say that they don't talk about politics, or they are sick of the news so they have stopped paying attention. This is especially concerning as 2020 is a presidential election year and understanding the candidates and their platforms is essential to making an informed vote. There are multitudes of people who are so overwhelmed by the sheer amount of content and education involved in becoming an educated voter that they choose to remain ignorant. This is a dangerous choice. Voting is a right and we have a responsibility to be informed voters.

First, it is important to understand a few things about how America is governed. The most shocking to me: we are not the pure democracy we advertise to high school kids. The U.S. is actually a constitutional republic with features of democracy. This means that we vote on certain issues but, for the most part, decisions are made by

elected officials, and their decisions are guided by constitutional law, so change has to come from within the system.

This deviation from democracy happens because it's pretty much impossible for everyone to vote on everything all the time. Usually, voters can trust that their elected



**Jessica Henn**

She/Her

Junior

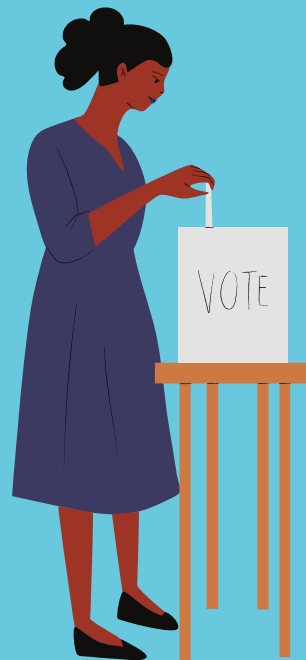
Economics

official will look out for their priorities in office. It's usually a good assumption that the person who was elected is qualified and capable of doing their job.

This changed for a lot of people after November of 2016. There is now an invisible struggle that exists within American society between what is a right, and what is a privilege. For example, voting is a right, choosing to not vote without consequences is a privilege. The ideal of the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" found in the Declaration of Independence has become astonishingly unobtainable for some; the root of these inequalities lies not only in the United States' Constitution, but also in the way that Constitution is applied to voters' rights.

The original Constitution perpetuated a system that served only those with political savvy in addition to wealth and power. Even though steps have been taken throughout American history to mitigate the road blocks to equal human rights, there are still numerous ways in which the American political system has failed. The modern application of the American idea of democracy is a dangerous, embellished claim. Our founding freedoms' unattainability is permitted by the suppression of the people's voice through voter ID laws, gerrymandering and the influence of the electoral college. These miscarriages of democracy silence individual voter participation and replace it with partisan influence.

First, it is important to understand how voter ID laws affect certain populations. For me, registering to vote is simple. I have a social security card and a driver's licence tied to a permanent address that allow me to vote in the state of Ohio. There are those in this country, however, who lack access to any form of ID. The most prominent example is



the voting rights of the unhomed. This marginalized group calls into question what it means to be an American citizen and how the political system actively marginalizes those who struggle economically.

The cracks in voting laws begin to show when one takes a deeper look into American society. The government operates under the assumption that everyone who has the right to vote also has the same ability to vote. However, those who experience homelessness have no permanent address and often do not possess any form of government ID, such as a driver's licence or a social security card. Without a form of ID, these people cannot vote. This undermines the very foundations of all that democracy is built on and further highlights the absence of a valid form of democracy within the American system.

This shows the ethical issue of voter ID laws. Every state has a different requirement to vote. Some states, like Texas, accept concealed carry licenses as voter ID, but not student IDs. While there is no logical or immediate solution to replace voter ID laws, they should be made to be more consistent; at the very least, a greater effort should be made to ensure that all citizens are able to obtain IDs. Voting should not be something that only those with a permanent address and the resources to obtain an ID can partake in.

The way voter ID laws deprive many eligible voters almost 11% of citizens according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), to be exact of their ability to vote is a form of voter suppression. This is especially prevalent because, as the ACLU states, there is no evidence that shows how in-person voting fraud is a problem, despite the controversy surrounding the 2020 presidential election. With polling location accessibility being an especially prevalent issue this election, claims regarding voter fraud are not being taken lightly. The effect of COVID-19 on many Americans' ability to vote in person has been stark.

This is even more prevalent in underprivileged communities. In addition to voter ID roadblocks, these communities also fall victim to partisan gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is the act of redrawing legislative districts, usually to tilt the balance of the state in favor of the political party in power. Gerrymandering affects underprivileged communities as it works to reduce clusters of like-minded people who do not support the party in power. These communities are, therefore, split up to reduce the power of their collective voice. This means that they have less of an impact on issues that affect their community.

Currently, gerrymandering is most prevalent in areas under Republican control because, according to the New York Times, Republican candidates did well in 2010 elections after the census and were then in charge of the redrawing of district lines. This, in turn, affects the

concentration of voters in the 2020 presidential election as well as in local elections.

Finally, individual votes aren't the final determining factor of presidential elections. This is the main defining feature that stops the United States from being a pure democracy; the candidate with the most votes from the public is not necessarily the winner. This was seen in the 2016 presidential election as Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by almost 3 million votes but still lost the election. Ultimately, Donald Trump lost the popular vote but won because of the Electoral College.

In the U.S., the Electoral College is a group of electors from each state who make the final judgement concerning the winner of a presidential election. There are 538 electors in total. To win the presidency, a candidate needs 270 electoral votes. These votes are the true determinant of who wins the presidency rather than the popular vote.

For years it has been debated whether to abolish the Electoral College. According to the New York Times and Gallop, 61% of Americans support abolishing the Electoral College in favor of the popular vote being the determining factor in presidential elections. However, this number is highly divided along party lines with 83% of Democrats in support and only 23% of Republicans. Fifteen states have already signed an interstate compact that ensures their electors will vote for the candidate who wins the popular vote. So what is the point of voting if electors will ultimately decide on the outcome of the election? Is Mark Twain correct in saying, "If voting made a difference, they wouldn't let us

do it"? Solutions to voting problems have been searched for and debated. No system is perfect and there is no obvious fix to make voting uniformly available to all. But the bottom line is this: we can do better. The most fundamental right to every American is representation. This is what sparked so many movements from the American Revolution to the Women's Suffrage movement. Every person has a right to a voice, whether it comes through voting or the right to peacefully protest, and this country was founded by people who aimed to ensure that right was never taken away.

But here we are in 2020, still fighting for rights that should have been granted 200 years ago. This is what our version of democracy looks like and it is not good enough. I, along with millions of others, demand that we do better. Revising voter ID laws, stopping gerrymandering, and abolishing the Electoral College is a good place to start.



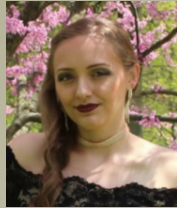
# EXAMINING A WORLD LEADER IN HEALTH DISPARITIES

The examination of health disparities is not limited connections between social, economic and environmental disadvantages; it is the key to one's lifestyle. According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Healthy People, health disparities are defined as inequalities seen in healthcare and overall health due to one's socioeconomic status, race, age or other selected factors.

Looking at social determinants as a precursor to one's access to healthcare allows for a descriptive image of peoples' lives in the United States. The rise of COVID-19 has further fueled and created inequalities in healthcare; examining differences in demographics, socioeconomic status, education, minority groups and hospital management can further provide an understanding of where problems are present and possible solutions that can be incorporated into eliminating these inequalities.

In the United States, it is often seen demographically that citizens have their own preferences and reasons for living in urban versus rural areas. When COVID-19 began to invade the nation unexpectedly around early January--worsening in March--there were large numbers of positive cases in both demographic areas, however, it is important to examine the various differences between quality and access to care between these two locations.

In urban areas, such as New York City, Seattle and New Orleans, also known as "hot spots," the rate of positive COVID-19 cases was higher, according to the Center for Disease Control, in addition to the greater likelihood of increased rates in small, densely populated counties outside of the city. Hot spot hospitals had access to COVID-19 testing equipment, which made the collection of this information possible and the analysis of data by the Center for



**Irma Mustafic**  
She/Her  
Junior  
Health Sciences

Disease Control doable.

In terms of rural areas, according to the Journal of Rural Health (NRHA), citizens were seen to have higher illness-risk diseases, such as hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity, however had the lowest frequencies in performing tests for COVID-19 detection. This inequality suggests that there is a lack of financial support for rural area hospitals, overall physician staff, as well as far distances from other hospitals. It is referenced in the NRHA that physicians in rural areas tend to be older in age, leading them to be at risk for COVID-19 along with their patients. Although rural areas have fewer positive cases due to lower population sizes, citizens who have underlying health conditions are still at risk for developing COVID-19 because of their limited access to care.

From my experience as a medical scribe in suburban areas close to rural ones, I often see transfer phone lines requesting patients to be seen for not only COVID-19, surgeries and further consultations from a variety of specialized clinicians as well. These actions only further demonstrate the demand of rural area citizens to travel miles away to obtain extensive care. The quality and accessibility of healthcare is illustrated differently between urban and rural life.

Wherever one decides to live, socioeconomic status (SES) and education can also be a determinant to obtaining accessible, quality medical care. It has been studied and hypothesized by the American Psychological Association (APA) that SES has a direct correlation with one's education



level. It can also be stated that one's accessibility to health care, as well as overall health plays a factor as well. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), it is often seen that citizens in lower income groups have lower total education levels, along with limited access to healthier foods and are deficient in good health long term.

It is important to note that some citizens are deprived of good overall health beginning with their childhood, due to low SES circumstances and the difficulty of breaking the cycle of poverty. This can be seen in both urban and rural areas. Consequently, with the progression of COVID-19 and accepting the health risks of the pandemic, it is important to note one's education level on the issue. Specifically, groups of individuals who still carry their beliefs that the pandemic is not a dangerous manner, and who risk the lives of others due to improper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), put the lives of millions of people at risk.

Despite the United States being one of the richest countries in the world, it leads one of the highest mortality rates; As noted by John Hopkins University of Medicine, the United States rate is 65.33 deaths per 100,000 for COVID-19. This is in line with Latin American countries, according to John Hopkins infectious disease specialists, which have their own worsening progression of COVID-19 detection. The surge of the mortality rate suggests that it increases due to overwhelmed hospitals that have few beds and insufficient resources to continue detecting more cases.

The major social determinant for the presences of health disparities are connected to racial minority groups, and their lack of accessible medical care. A product of migration effect, more diverse populations are situated in urban areas and surrounding counties. In the time of COVID-19, African Americans, Latinx and American Indians showed a consistent positive increase of COVID-19 detection, the National Institute of Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) found. COVID-19 case rates, according to the same source, were substantially higher among these racial groups with African American populations having 925 cases and Latinx groups having 1000 in Chicago, IL alone.

The higher number of cases suggest that urban areas with more diverse, minority populations are given less preventative care and overall access to healthcare. Due to this lack of care, minority groups are more susceptible to developing chronic diseases. The lack of public policies in these areas places a further divide between medical care and overall population health. Alongside minority groups, fears of medical debt cause people to refuse or decline medical care when requested by medical providers. If one is uninsured, it leaves them vulnerable to medical bills that cannot be paid. For insured citizens, the rise of out of network charges, cost-sharing and expensive deductibles

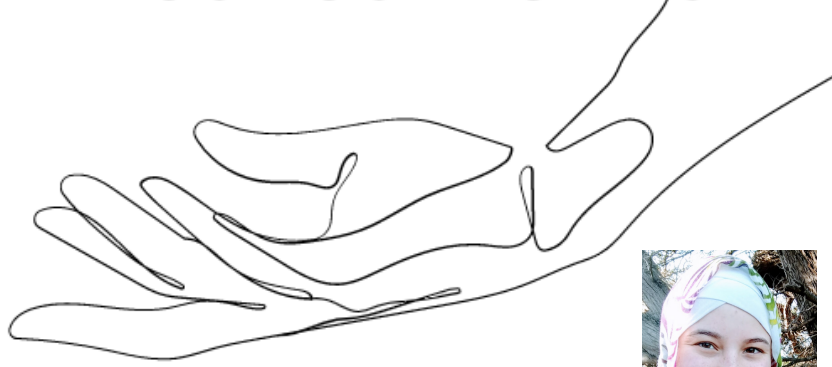
can place them at risk for unexpected medical bills too. The lack of financial support and aid to these minority groups only further creates a communication barrier and inequality in obtaining affordable medical care.

In order to progress from the unexpected, scary year of 2020, solutions to minimize these health disparities should be enacted. One positive aspect COVID-19 has shed light on is that the U.S. must work to improve the healthcare system to be accessible to everyone--regardless of lifestyle, income, education or racial circumstances. The building and incorporating of community centers in both urban and rural areas can provide support and aid for citizens to receive proper nutritious foods, transportation, PPE and housing. Specifically in dense urban areas, local fresh gardens can help reduce food deserts, in turn improving long term overall health. In rural areas, transportation can help provide quicker access to hospitals as well as primary doctors regularly. In urban areas, financial support clinics for low SES individuals can provide support and further education on different types of payment plan options and help people understand financial literacy. This would lessen the burdens of stress due to medical costs, and further allow people to realize that healthcare is a necessity for survival; future generations of families can then understand the importance of obtaining medical care throughout one's life, without fears of medical debt further straining life circumstances. No matter if you live on a farm or in a townhouse, you deserve equal access to healthcare.



# AMERICAN AUTONOMY

## THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR BODIES IN MEDICINE



**Beyza Cardakli**

She/Her

First-Year

Neuroscience

Maskless protestors entered the Michigan statehouse in late April 2020. Armed with firearms, they demanded that the economy be reopened. Many protestors outside the building held up signs claiming that they wanted haircuts and that they should be able to make decisions about their own body.

As they watched the protests unfold, Americans asked themselves: where did we go wrong? Why don't people trust the scientific community? While it is essential to wear a mask during this pandemic, oppositions to science are not always without foundation or reason. American history is riddled with unethical practices and studies that left a lasting sense of distrust and suspicion toward the medical community and the American government that often funds such experiments. Simply put, American science has a bad record of invading people's bodily autonomy.

Open a history textbook and the pages will be filled with the accomplishments of great doctors and professionals. The trials and experiments that took place to get to those achievements, however, are seldom mentioned. American medicine is built on the exploitation of the lower class. In the 1840s, immigrants arriving from Ireland were often left to die in the slums. According to the book "Bellevue: Three Centuries of Medicine and Mayhem at America's Most Storied Hospital", their corpses were dug up by medical school students for testing and dissection. There was a false assumption, held by a Protestant majority, that Irish dedication to the Catholic religion made them "dirty," and so these immigrants were shamed and blamed for diseases.

As property, enslaved Africans and their American children had no bodily autonomy. It was incorrectly believed that Black people could feel no pain, and experiments conducted mirrored such beliefs. From James Marion Sims, who conducted gynecological experiments on Black women without anesthesia, to the U.S. Public Health Service letting Black men die in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, Black Americans have been given good reason to distrust, doubt and suspect the government and greater medical community of prevarications and falsehoods.

The AIDS epidemic, a more recent event, also

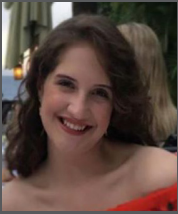
disrupted Americans' bodily autonomy and placed the government under scrutiny. When doctors refused to see HIV patients, hospital authorities looked the other way. Ronald Reagan, who was the president during the pandemic, undermined the seriousness of the situation and jokingly called it the "gay plague," according to Vox. Thousands of queer Americans and people of color were ignored and left to die without proper funding and care.

Today, the COVID-19 crisis leaves many families at risk. Yet, we see President Trump refusing to wear a mask, people doubting the science behind social distancing and polls showing that many Americans would not take a vaccine if it were available. These actions are not new; Americans are following a pattern of distrust toward medicine. Whether it be out of ignorance, misinformation or doubt, the fact of the matter is that this pandemic is only worsening by the day. When an authority figure isn't present for the public, the public will create their own authority—whether that be Facebook, conspiracy theories or unfounded claims.

This is troubling. While there is a horrendous history of scientists and the government invading individuals' bodily autonomy, wearing a mask is not an invasion. We should condemn the anti-maskers while, at the same time, recognizing that our government and scientific community have not always properly cared for the public or their bodily autonomy.

In order to patch the relationship between the public and the medical community, certain events must take place. The government should accept all fault regarding the inhumane experiments and negligence that still continue to affect minority communities. An official apology should be issued to American citizens who have died and those who continue to be affected by HIV. A greater demographic shift must occur in the medical community. More people of color and queer members should have the chance to become medical professionals. If the medical community wants American citizens to trust them with their lives, change is not not only expected, but necessary.

# Beyond the Box Office:



**Lilly Adams**  
She/Her  
Junior  
Political Science

## What The Hamilton Film Does for Theatre Accessibility

In February of 2020, Walt Disney Studios announced that it had purchased the distribution rights to professionally filmed performances of the hit musical “Hamilton,” and planned a theatrical release for October of 2021. Just a short three months later, creator Lin-Manuel Miranda announced via Twitter that, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the film and performing arts industry, the film would premiere on Disney+ in July 2020.

While there was hesitancy about this at first, it turned out to be a huge success. On the weekend of the release, downloads of the Disney+ app saw a 72% increase, and in August 2020 Variety reported that 37.1% of subscribers had streamed the film. The second highest portion of streams on any streaming service is 13.7% with Netflix’s Unsolved Mysteries, trailing behind the sensation of Hamilton’s streaming release.

“Hamilton” is notorious for being nearly impossible to get tickets. When the show opened on Broadway in 2015, there was a waiting list that got up to two years long, even though the tickets already cost on average between \$400 and \$1000, according to Daily Beast. The only way to see it back then, was to be someone important or to know someone important.

For all of these reasons, “Hamilton” became extremely inaccessible to the general public, even more so than any of the other expensive musicals on Broadway. To his credit, Miranda has been very proactive in making sure that as many people as possible can get the chance to enjoy his musical hit. According to a Playbill interview with the show’s official choreographer, he ensured that the show was choreographed in a way that it was still visually enjoyable to people sitting in the very last row on the highest balcony, since, as a child, his family could rarely afford any other seats.

He also created the Hamilton Lottery, which reserved a couple tickets at each performance for people who entered their names in the lottery to win free tickets. The chances were slim obviously, but it still gave a large number of people the chance to see it who might not have been able to afford it otherwise. The cast also organized Ham4Ham, which was when they would stand outside the stage doors on Wednesday afternoons and sing songs from the show—just for anyone on the street—completely free.

When the “Hamilton” film was announced, it was a huge deal to anyone who had always wanted to see the musical—

especially with its 11-Tony-Award-winning original cast—but had never been able to access tickets. Not only that, but many people who may never have even considered looking into “Hamilton” have now been exposed to it and have realized that they really like it.

This is where production companies should start to take notes on the advantages of making live theater more widely available to people who might not be able to fly all the way out to New York City and pay for tickets to a Broadway show. The art of theater can once again become a place for all people, not just wealthy elites.

Other than the obvious financial benefits of releasing a hit musical on a streaming service, it would also begin to eventually cultivate a wider range of people interested in musical theater. And, if audiences expand to include people with a more diverse set of interests and backgrounds, then Broadway will eventually see more and more groundbreaking and inclusive musicals.

“Hamilton” stood out because Miranda broke from more traditional theater music styles and utilized rap and hip hop; many people laughed at first, including the attendees at his 2009 White House “work-in-progress” performance, but his risk paid off. There are many more people out there who are creative, out-of-the-box thinkers that could do absolutely incredible things in musical theater, but are unable to access the stage right now because of financial barriers. To draw these people out, they first need to feel included, and that starts with not restricting the enjoyment of live theater to people who can comfortably spend hundreds of dollars just to see one show.

Not much good has come out of this pandemic for anyone, and many industries, including film and performing arts, have been struggling. In fact, The Brookings Institution counts a loss of \$150 billion in revenue and over 2.7 million jobs in the creative industry due to COVID-19, which includes film, fashion, stage and other arts. But if the performing arts industry can learn anything from such a rough patch, it’s that accessibility through streaming will open up new possibilities for audiences, creators and production companies alike.

Watching a live production of a musical, whether in person or on screen, can be a wonderful experience and it should not be limited to the upper-middle-class or elite. If production companies believe in the importance of the arts in everyone’s lives as much as they say they do, they will follow in “Hamilton”’s footsteps and ensure that live theater is more accessible through streaming and theatrical releases.



# BUSTING THE MYTH OF MODEL MINORITY

"If there's a will there's a way."

This age-old phrase has always emphasized the idea that anyone, no matter what, can be successful if they just try hard enough. As an individualistic country, the United States tends to enjoy that phrase. Our education system emphasizes this perspective at a young age and instills the idea that you can do anything as long as you can work for it.

Hard work is championed in South Asian families as a determinant of success. As a child, this ideology was heavily emphasized by my parents. They drilled the value of hard work for as long as I can remember. Their struggles as immigrants taught them that “making it” in the United States required dedication and persistence. Back then, hearing this created a sense of pride within me; I was proud of my parents for overcoming obstacles to give me a better life. It wasn’t until recently that I began to understand how this mindset had manifested itself into a toxic narrative that those who are unsuccessful don’t have the right work ethic. However, this narrative isn’t isolated to my parents. It is

told in most South Asian households, according to BBC correspondent Sakshi Venkatraman, and has laid the foundation for the



## Swathy Karthikeyan

She/Her

Sophomore

Neuroscience

commonly racist views held by some South Asians that other minorities are less successful because they do not prioritize a strong work ethic. This ideology has spread to many, causing people to praise one minority group for their status while chastising another. It is these components that intertwine to create what is known as the “Model Minority Myth.”

The Model Minority Myth, according to author Viet Thanh Nguyen in Time Magazine, is the false idea that Asian Americans “overcame” their discrimination through hard work to become one of the most successful demographics in the United States. This myth inaccurately puts forth the idea that Asian immigrants rose above the prejudice they endured while other minorities, particularly Black and Latinx people, have failed to do so. This has been the root of many racist viewpoints found in Asian families, as well as other people who refuse to acknowledge systemic racism. The myth doesn’t recognize that there are several outside circumstances that undermine work ethic and inhibit future success. You can work really hard, but external and systemic factors can render it inconsequential.

The origins of the Model Minority Myth trace back to the 1870s according to historian Julia G. Young, when xenophobia against Asian immigrants was rampant within the United States. She discusses the racist policies against Asian immigrants advocated for by nativists during this era. The phrase “Yellow Peril” was coined to describe American fears of Chinese immigrants disrupting the U.S. Young further discusses the harmful legislations designed against Asians such as the “queue ordinance” that forced immigrants to cut their hair. More notably, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 suspended Chinese immigration for 10 years and the Scott Act prohibited the return of any Chinese immigrant that left the country. These xenophobic ideologies heightened during the 1900s when Japanese and Korean populations increased in the U.S.





Today, the U.S. has a far more favorable view on Asian immigrants. In his book, "The Model Minority Stereotype: Demystifying Asian American Success", Nicholas Daniel Hartlep attributes this drastic change to the heavy meritocracy ideologies held by many Americans at the time. During the early 20th century, several articles were produced that described Asian work ethic and focus on education. These studies were emphasized in many publications, most significantly The New York Times' "Success Story, Japanese-American Style", which described how Japanese Americans rose up and overcame the severe discrimination they faced during World War II. These publications became a popular, yet glamorized explanation for Asian American success in education and in the workforce.

Later on, the increased need for workers in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) field significantly increased the level of Asian immigrants in the U.S. Michael Wildes in the Washington Post explains how the increased distribution of H1B visas enabled more highly skilled Asians to come to the U.S. and take up high paying STEM jobs. This rapidly improved the viewpoint regarding Asian immigrants and led to the stereotype that Asians are naturally good at math and science. These aspects eventually led to Asian Americans being among the highest paid group in the United States, according to Arthur Sakamoto, professor at Texas A&M University. What many took away from this was that Asian immigrants had the "right" values and mindset which led them to achieve a higher socioeconomic status after enduring severe racism over the last century. This quickly turned into a weapon for people to criticize other minority groups for not achieving the same level of success. Asians were designated the "model minority" and were pitted against other minorities.

The unfortunate truth is that this narrative of Asians achieving the "American Dream" glosses over many details that actually would dismantle the myth. In 1943, the Magnuson Act was passed that drastically increased the number of Chinese immigrants permitted to enter the U.S. There were ulterior motives to this seemingly altruistic act. Because the U.S. foresaw a need for an alliance with China against imperialist Japan during WWII, this act was passed to make the formation of an alliance more feasible. Later, in the 1990s, Asian immigrants were chosen based on their skills in STEM to come to the U.S. and take jobs in high end companies, according to Wildes. The significance of this is that discrimination against Asian immigrants subsided only when it was either politically convenient or profitable. At the end of the day my stereotype as an Asian American inherently benefits me. I am perceived to be good at math, hardworking and disciplined by the outside world. My qualifications are already assumed in the job market. Regardless of work ethic, there are always racist individuals who will be dismissive because of their bias.

Many factors undermine the Model Minority Myth and show that there is more to success than hard work. The neighborhood you grew up in, the school you attend, the treatment you receive by authority figures, the way you are treated by the criminal justice system and the way society

sees you influences the possibilities for success. It is essential to keep these details in mind or we risk falling subject to lies that perpetuate disparities in the U.S. experience today. In the end, the U.S. continues to promote the ideals of meritocracy to create excuses for the severe inequities present in our country today. Until we face the truth of the mistakes we have made and actively work to remedy them, the "land of opportunities" will only be accessible to a select few.

There is much to be done from today. The first place to start with is yourself. To my fellow Asian Americans: reflect on how you benefit from the Model Minority Myth. Recognize the impact that the Civil Rights Movement had on immigration and how your existence in the U.S. today is largely dependent on the activists of other races that worked hard to create a fairer country. The next step is where it gets hard.

Though our parents are the product of the culture that they were born into, we can no longer accept the racist ideologies they hold. Though these conversations are hard, they must be held if there is any chance at creating legitimate change. Challenge the racist conversations held at family dinners rather than sitting in passivity. Don't be a model minority, be a model of change.





# MEDICARE FOR WHO?

## HOW DRAWING DISTRICTS DETERMINES HEALTH



**Alexis Guffey**

She/Her

Junior

Sociology

In the last year, it has become unavoidably evident that the United States health care system is failing. The U.S. spends more on health care than any other country, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), yet its recipients are among the unhealthiest in the world. This isn't new, and it's not a secret.

This year, the issue has received national attention as COVID-19 highlighted the failures of the health care system though the countless families that have gone into debt from hospital bills or lost loved ones from insufficient care. These issues have been a talking point during the election season, most notably among the candidates in the Democratic primary.

Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren introduced plans for "Medicare for All" and essentially brought health care reform into public consciousness. As people debated the merits of "Medicare for All," it became a conversation. The slogan "healthcare is a human right" was made into Instagram graphics and laptop stickers while Republicans bashed the plans for raising taxes.

The concept of "Medicare for All" is by no means easy to unpack. Before looking forward, let's agree that health care is a human right. Let's put aside how to pay for it or how big taxes will be, and instead focus on what implementing "Medicare for All" would actually look like. "Medicare for All" isn't an overnight fix for health care in America. These bills would give universal coverage to Americans, but in order to see the full picture, it's necessary to look at access and structural disadvantages. Even if a "Medicare for All" bill was passed tomorrow, there would still be massive health inequality in America—and I saw this firsthand last March.

During spring break, I went on an immersion trip to West Virginia through Saint Louis University's campus ministry. We spent the beginning of the trip in a small rural town called Kermit —ground zero for the opioid epidemic. Every sociology and public health class I've taken

has talked about how the quality of hospitals varies based on demographics, but hearing that and actually seeing it is completely different.

In Kermit, their health care discrepancies meant

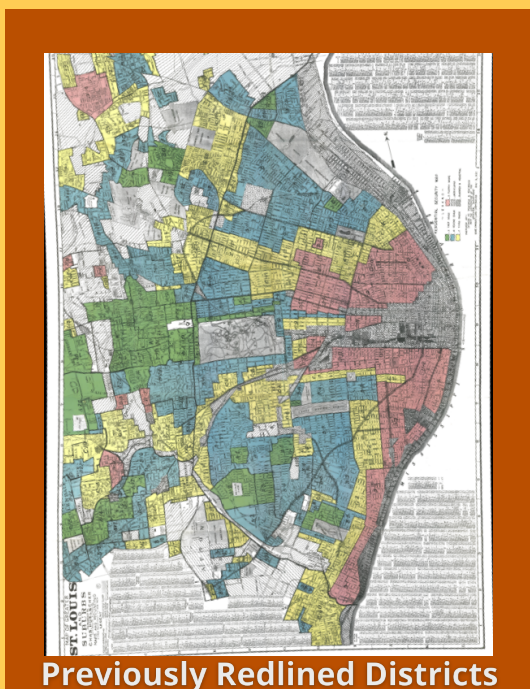
that the local health center was unprepared to treat most conditions, and in order to actually get help, they would have to travel over an hour to a hospital in Kentucky. For some people, this was an inconvenience; for most, it meant that they didn't get medical treatment. The first night we spent in Kermit, we woke up around 1 a.m. to loud sirens. In the morning, we found out that they were used to warn that a helicopter might be landing to take someone to the hospital. In a town of 400 people, these emergencies happened almost daily.

Universal coverage won't change the distance to a hospital for people in Kermit or the countless other places like it. It won't necessarily change the quality of care people receive once they get there, or the circumstances they live in that cause

health problems. In America, the wealth of where you live dictates the quality of care you can receive.

This didn't happen by accident. Communities of color have been separated from predominantly white areas throughout history—while segregation has ended in theory, its effects still disadvantage communities with residual implications of discriminatory practices. Redlining is the most damning example.

In 1934, the government created the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to improve the housing market after the Great Depression. This administration, however, created an environment for structural inequality by color coding cities based on which locations would be safe investments. Areas where people of color lived were marked in red, and were ineligible for FHA funding. This practice of redlining was essentially legalized segregation, and although it was banned in 1968 with the Fair Housing Act, its impacts haven't disappeared. To quote Ta-Nehisi



**Previously Redlined Districts**

Coates, “An unsegregated America might see poverty spread across the country, with no particular bias toward skin color.” Unfortunately, that isn’t America’s reality.

Previously redlined areas are still disadvantaged—they still have higher percentages of people of color living there, less essential services, more abandoned buildings and less opportunity according to The Washington Post. This isn’t a foreign concept—it’s not uncommon to hear people warn against going north of the Delmar neighborhood in St. Louis. The “Delmar Divide” marks what was a redlined area in St. Louis, and the structural inequality it’s created in the city is still obvious.

Redlining created one of the biggest hurdles for real health equality. “Medicare for All” refers to coverage only, but the circumstances of families living in the suburbs versus those in intentionally disadvantaged places are not the same. Structural factors create health problems. Health is not merely the absence of disease, according to the World Health Organization, but a state of mental, physical and social well being. When a person lives in an area where the nearest grocery store is far away, there aren’t safe places nearby to walk or exercise, they struggle with housing insecurity and the public schools are underfunded, they will face greater challenges in maintaining quality health than people who live surrounded by those privileges.

These public health lapses can lead to health issues that are then perpetuated by the lack of nearby or quality health care centers. The goal of enacting “Medicare for All” fails to realize that where you live dictates what your health looks like. Ultimately, the reality of this plan is just Medicare for all, not health for all.

Our current for-profit health care system has allowed hospitals and resources to become concentrated in areas where they will be profitable. Hospitals generally have a specific percentage of Medicare and Medicaid patients

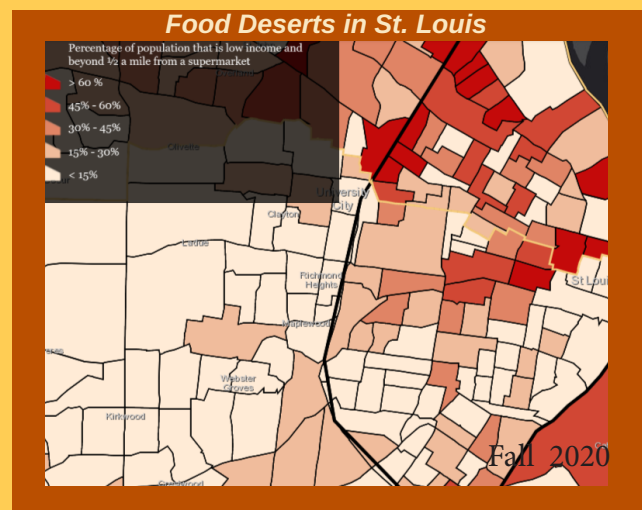
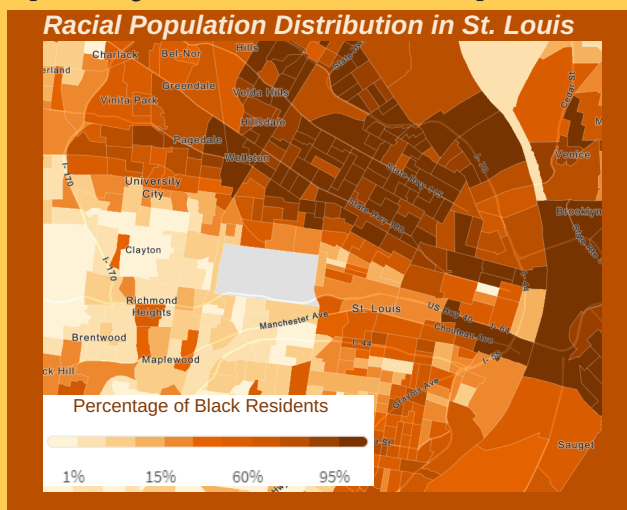
they can handle while still making a profit. The Kaiser Family Foundation found that areas with lower average incomes, however, often have more patients with Medicare and Medicaid than this threshold allows for, which means they pay doctors less or are forced to close. Hospitals that can stay afloat end up overburdened and understaffed. Suburbs and higher-income areas, on the other hand, statistically have a higher number of hospitals and private practice locations, and a wider dispersion of people who have Medicare and Medicaid between facilities according to a study in the Journal of Urban Health. These discrepancies based on location establish a two tiered health care system in America. “Medicare for All” won’t erase this—in order to have health equality, these structural disadvantages have to be addressed at their root cause.

Of course, it isn’t feasible to just erase these inequalities with one bill. “Medicare for All” is a start that will guide the U.S. health care system in the right direction by providing care for thousands who need it and ensuring no one goes into debt for hospital bills. However, it is not the panacea for health inequality that some liberals seem to tout it as. The American health care system was built on rugged capitalism and for-profit insurance. It shouldn’t be a surprise that it has resulted in inequalities deeper than coverage. “Medicare for All” is not a bad proposal—it simply is dangerous to

see it as the gold standard for health care reform when it should be the bare minimum.

In order for actual reform to begin, work needs to be done to undo the damage already created. There is no cut-and-dry solution for changing a system that was built to disadvantage groups based on race and income; however, like most problems in America, the beginning lies in education. Creating change requires calling out what is broken, learning why and demanding better.

**“Ultimately, the reality of this plan is just Medicare for all, not health for all.”**





# CAN WE DO IT?

## WARTIME AND PANDEMIC PROPAGANDA



**Priya Shah**

She/Her

Junior

Neuroscience

When you're watching TV or listening to music, you might have seen random commercials pop up during quarantine telling you to buy a car because it'll be beneficial for you during this pandemic. Or, you should buy the car because the company is your friend during this pandemic. Or my favorite: companies telling you to buy their products, but the whole time, they have slow, sad music playing while they ponder on about the pandemic.

No one needs to be constantly reminded that a pandemic is happening, and we especially don't want to see commercials during this time period that berate us with the message. But the real question is, why are there a lot of the commercials and propaganda telling us to "fight" COVID-19? We truly can't fight with a virus—at least not in the literal sense—we don't have any weapons nor an army equipped to combat a pandemic.

However, for some reason, many of the different types of propaganda that we see today are telling us to fight COVID-19, in a manner that is very similar to wartime propaganda. But understanding these similarities, we can recognize that this pandemic is not a war that we need to be "fighting"—rather, this is a time to be defensive and protect ourselves.

First, public health imagery has been alluding to famous war effort propaganda. Take the image of Uncle Sam from the War of 1812 saying, "I want you for the U.S. Army." The famous poster has been recreated to say "Quarantine in time saves nine" with an image of Uncle Sam and the nine essential workers of this pandemic. Another image from the World War II era says, "Stop this grab, buy war bonds," representing the necessity of citizens supporting war bonds. There is an alternative in terms of this pandemic: a poster with the slogan, "Stop this pandemic, stay inside," with the same image appearing alongside the words.

Second, news sources have been treating COVID-19 more like a war than a pandemic. An editorial from The Guardian showed two essential workers—all suited up in personal protective equipment—and the caption reads "How Vietnam is winning its 'war' on Coronavirus." The iconic "We Can Do It" poster from WWII was created to build female worker morale and its counterpart in terms of the pandemic shows two healthcare workers holding their hands high saying, "We Can Do It," to indicate that we can fight this pandemic together. These pandemic images are all clearly based on the

propaganda that was created during wartime and shows an indication that people are continuously comparing the COVID-19 pandemic to a war. However, the situation that we are in right now does not compare to a war.

We have the wrong mindset. In wartime, there seems to be the idea of America first and militarism being a strong focal point whereas the real focus right now should be public health. Historically, this has looked like looking more in-depth at scientific research and encouraging the use of healthy safety precautions.

Wartime mindsets can harm international relations during a pandemic, however, as the "war against the virus" fallacy creates xenophobia according to The Washington Post. Countries blame one another for the start and continuation of the virus, and global values such as multilateralism are in jeopardy when there is no solidarity across borders. However, a plan needs to be put into place to help the world come together to handle this pandemic, and international relations are especially necessary to overcome this global challenge.

Currently, the pandemic we are fighting is not a war—yet we are treating it as such. A pandemic requires empathy, trust and strong international relations, but we are currently using terminology such as, "The end of the pandemic is near," or, "A vaccine will put an end to all this," to make it seem like it can be easily solved using the appropriate measures. In the case of this pandemic, we need to focus on protecting ourselves from disease, not gathering warfare and lining up on the front line. Our "weapons" as we may call them are actually just masks, hand sanitizer and social distancing. When we say that we are "fighting" against COVID-19 without actually using this equipment, we are not addressing the real problem.

Importantly, there is no certain end in sight; a victory day of some sort will not be approaching us. Rather, we will be taking measures that will transform our government, public policy and future to prevent the onset of another such pandemic. When news organizations deploy "fight" or companies brandish images of Uncle Sam, we use patriotism to fight a public health crisis; we are using the wrong tools and expecting a happy ending.

Leaders have started to consider themselves as "wartime leaders." President Donald Trump has identified himself as a "wartime President," according to Politico,

with the rising death count and suspension of normal life. However, there is no war at hand; although with the healthcare systems setting up battlefield triage stations and numerous people dying, it may seem that we are in the darkest times of war. However, the famous wartime motto of “United we stand, divided we fall” has been reversed with people being told to self-isolate.

We don’t need to fight COVID-19; rather, we should be protecting ourselves and others. Treating this pandemic as if we are fighting in a war is the wrong approach because fighting wars involves things like hoarding supplies, putting together an army of people and turning all our factories into weaponry production, as happened in World War II according to the History Channel. However, we should not be doing any of these things. Rather, we should try to work together, remotely of course, and support each other. In the beginning of the pandemic, people had started to gather and hoard supplies with the speculation that they would never be able to leave their homes. However, this was not the case. Grocery stores stayed open with reduced hours and created limits on essential items. Hoarding supplies this way was an inconsiderate approach because people should consider others and their needs as well as their own. Additionally, keeping this pandemic as a problem for only essential workers, researchers and the government to handle is the wrong step. This pandemic affects us all so we should start treating it that way by taking necessary steps to stay indoors around close family or roommates only, avoid large gatherings and make sure to wear a mask when leaving home. This is a time where everyone needs to be doing their part because if we leave everything up to just essential workers—treating them like we would soldiers in a war—the virus will continue to spread and only make matters worse.

As well, being there for each other is so important during this pandemic. Calling up friends and family members, having virtual times to hang out with each other and supporting others overall is so important during a time like this. It helps us know that we are not alone so we don’t succumb to measures that negatively impact our lives. Wars, a heinous aspect of humanity, are solvable with treaties and cease-fires. However, even a vaccine can’t end the stain COVID-19 has left on our society. The impact of the pandemic will continue to go far into our future and change how daily life will continue to be run.

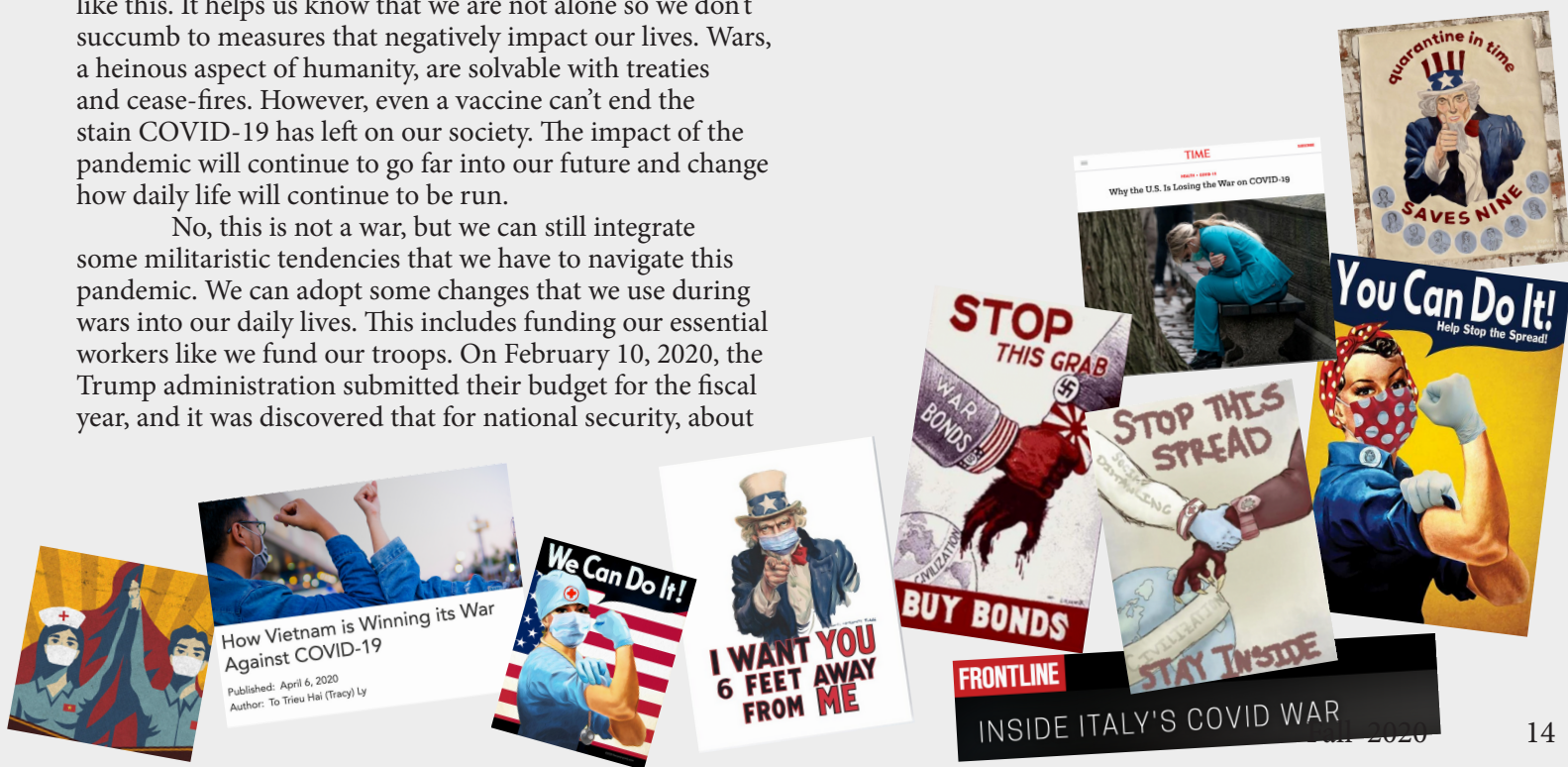
No, this is not a war, but we can still integrate some militaristic tendencies that we have to navigate this pandemic. We can adopt some changes that we use during wars into our daily lives. This includes funding our essential workers like we fund our troops. On February 10, 2020, the Trump administration submitted their budget for the fiscal year, and it was discovered that for national security, about

\$740.5 billion was spent by the Department of Defense. Already this year, the government has spent \$11.4 billion on 79 F-35 Joint strike fighters; the cost of one of these F-35 strike fighters could have bought the country at least 2,800 ventilators according to the Cato Institute.

As we can tell, the government neglects to spend sufficient money on healthcare and public health. Yes, national security is extremely important, but keeping people alive is also a priority. The healthcare field and public health in general needs proper funding to cover costs of essential supplies for citizens and essential workers alike, especially during the pandemic. Another step that citizens can take is to use our personal protective equipment (PPE) like we use our diplomacy: as a first line of defense in times of conflict.

Overall, our military is not always good or the best solution for every national crisis. This pandemic has been affecting everyone at levels that were unimaginable before this began. One thing is for sure, we need to start protecting ourselves instead of starting a “war” with the pandemic. Being defensive rather than offensive allows us to take care of ourselves and prevent us from harming others.

Yes, a lot of the propaganda right now has similarities to wartime America, but there are major differences. Our futures will change like never before, an end is nowhere in sight and there won’t be a final victory day celebration. Rather, there will be important changes made, and more precautions taken continuously. Let’s make sure to not cause harm to others, be honest about the timelines, give what you can and take responsibility to wear PPE to protect yourself and others.





# Recruiting Racism: THE REALITY OF GREEK LIFE

Sisterhood, support and love are all words that come to mind when I think of my time as a member of a sorority at Saint Louis University (SLU). Being a part of Greek Life has changed my life for the better and has brought me friendships that will last a lifetime. When I look around at the Panhellenic Community at SLU, I see women who are inspiring, encouraging and intelligent. However, unfortunately I also see mostly women who look a lot like me: white, straight, Christian and able-bodied.

It is an undeniable fact that sororities and fraternities, especially at Saint Louis University, are not diverse organizations. In light of the racial unrest within our country in the past year, many institutions have been criticized for their lack of diversity and representation, including Greek Life. On social media, Greek Life has been under constant scrutiny for their racist, classist and homophobic practices. As a result, “Abolish Greek Life” movements have sprung up at college campuses all over the United States including Vanderbilt University, University of North Carolina, Washington University in Saint Louis and several others.

The Abolish Greek Life movement is rooted in the fact that racism is so deeply ingrained into fraternities and sororities that it cannot be reformed. According to the Abolish Greek Life Movement at Washington University in Saint Louis (WashU), Greek Life is “inextricably tied to racism. Through a lack of diversity, exclusion, tokenism and performative allyship, [it] amplifies privilege and perpetuates disadvantages for marginalized people.” The Instagram account @aglwashu was created as a space for students to share their negative experiences in Greek Life and to further advance their message of abolition. As of October 10, 2020, they have over 3,000 followers and almost 80 posts about horrible incidents in sororities and fraternities of sexual assault, racism, body shaming and much more.

These stories resonated with thousands of students. A survey done by the WashU Student Union found that a majority of students support the abolition of Greek Life on campus. The petition calling for the removal currently has over 900 signatures. While many students have voluntarily chosen to disassociate from their sorority or fraternity, and several organizations have disbanded entirely, Greek Life still remains at Washington University for now.

Similar actions have been taken at universities across the country. At Tufts University, the Panhellenic Association suspended recruitment for the fall in order to take time “to reflect on the space held by Greek Life at Tufts,



**Claire Heggie**

She/Her

Sophomore

Economics and  
Political Science

and what can be done moving forward to foster a social environment that is diverse, inclusive and representative of the greater Tufts community.” At University of Richmond, every member of the governing body of sororities stepped down in response to the calls for abolition. While no university has officially banned Greek Life, hundreds of students have voted to disband their chapters, and thousands more have disassociated because of this movement.

In order to truly understand how sororities and fraternities ended up in this position, it is imperative to understand why they were created. According to Katherine Weaver, writer for Freely Magazine, the first Greek organization, Phi Beta Kappa, was founded for wealthy, white men in Virginia at William and Mary University in 1776. Similar organizations sprung up at universities all over the United States, including sororities for white women. People of color were continuously excluded. Matthew Hughey, Professor of Sociology at Mississippi State, found that it wasn't until the 1960s, almost 200 years after Greek Life began, that racial bans were removed from the statutes of Greek-letter organizations. However, indirect policies of discrimination still remain; legacy policies and membership dues are just a few of the standards intended to keep minorities out.

Greek organizations were created to discriminate, and if you look at them today it is evident that they achieved that goal. According to Hughey, over 95% of members in historically white fraternities and sororities are still white. One can witness this first hand at SLU; If you look at any sorority or fraternity on campus, the lack of diversity will be striking.

While the Abolish Greek Life movement has yet to make it to SLU, there are many students concerned about our Greek organizations. For example the Instagram account @blackatslu shared a story of a student of color who decided to go through recruitment for a fraternity at SLU. The student said, “I thought things were going well, and I was getting along with everyone at events. Then, at one of the last events, one of [the members of the fraternity] ‘jokingly’

said, 'Of course we'll bid you, gotta pump up those diversity numbers.' I laughed awkwardly and maybe he meant it as a joke, but it instantly made me feel entirely defined by my skin tone and made me wonder if any of them actually liked me." This was not an isolated event; incidents of racism and discrimination are common in Greek Life, and SLU Fraternity and Sorority Life is no exception.

While racism and discrimination still run rampant in Greek Life, not everyone believes that abolition is the solution to these problems. Some students and administrators believe they can change the system from the inside out, creating Greek letter organizations that are both inclusive and actively anti-racist.

Brienna Crisone, Program Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life at SLU echoes this opinion saying, "We should not be stepping away from the problems that exist within Greek Life, but instead not letting the dialogue and opportunities for change stop." Many echo Crisone's position, advocating for reform instead of abolition. They acknowledge the need for change and believe that this change can come from the Greek organizations themselves.

However, reform will not be an easy task. In order to truly dismantle the systemic racism that has existed within Greek letter organizations since their indoctrination, there must be a massive movement of individuals willing to reform. According to Luella Loseille, Assistant Director of Diversity and Inclusion at the Cross Cultural Center at SLU, the calls to abolish Greek Life in general are understandable, due to its exclusionary history, and she says that, "When reforming efforts are performative and consistently fail, then I think abolishment is the next step in order to create something better."

However, Loseille also believes it is "possible to dismantle racism within Greek Life without abolishment, but it will require intentional willingness and effort to make it happen. Racism cannot be dismantled until those who benefit from it—be it knowingly or unknowingly—recognize that it is present within the organization and is harming members."

It is imperative that every member of every chapter at SLU reflects on their role in creating change within their organizations. There is not one person, one policy, or one statement that will make this problem go away—it will require active commitment from every single person involved.

It is also essential that chapter leadership and the governing bodies of fraternities and sororities create opportunities for reform. The Panhellenic Association at SLU has made several changes to encourage more diversity within the organization, including the creation of a Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion position with a corresponding committee, facilitating a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion session with all chapters before recruitment and Safezone training. While these are positive steps, they do not go far enough. Individual chapters must also commit to changing the systems and bias that exist within their organizations.

Chapter leaders must facilitate reform within their chapters. First, all members need to be regularly educated

on the racism that exists within Greek Life, universities and our society as a whole. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training should be a regular requirement, not just once a year during recruitment. This education and awareness should also be coupled with discussion surrounding how racism has contributed to the persistent segregation within Greek Life, and what solutions are necessary and possible.

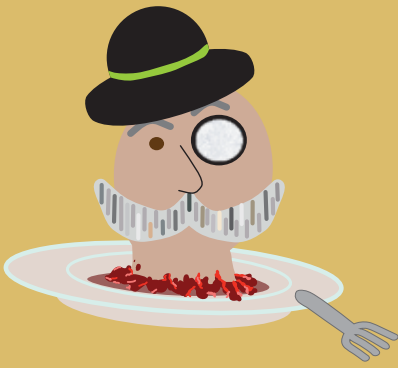
All chapters should discontinue legacy and other membership policies that work to recruit predominantly white members. Additionally, chapters must look into every possible solution to lower membership fees, especially for low-income students, including financial aid or scholarship opportunities. This will make Greek Life more accessible and welcoming for all students. Finally, it is crucial that every member is held accountable for their actions. There should be no tolerance for any racist, homophobic, sexist or discriminatory action or statement within a chapter.

Individual members must hold each other accountable, as well as chapter leadership taking appropriate action. In order to truly create an inclusive environment, there is no room for complacency in incidents of discrimination.

It can be difficult to come to terms with the fact that a dearly loved institution is inherently racist. Membership in a sorority at SLU enhances college experiences by bringing in role models and friends through bonding and philanthropy. However, it is impossible to ignore the undeniable racism and discrimination that has shaped Greek Life into the organization it is today. It's up to the sisterhood to improve the sisterhood.







# EAT THE RICH

## Billionaires And The American Dream

One million seconds is the same duration as twelve days. One billion seconds? Thirty-two years. That's the difference the three additional zeros can make. The American billionaire has become a confusing concept, even during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent global economic strife. While the rest of America is still trying to make ends meet with the \$1200 one-time stimulus check, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos got \$70 billion richer in the past 12 months according to Business Insider. The famous Bezos has a net worth greater than Iceland, Luxembourg and Sri Lanka combined.

Bezos isn't an anomaly—CNN Business found that 615 billionaires gained a total of \$565 billion in wealth throughout the pandemic, owning a total of \$3.4 trillion. These discrepancies indicate a grotesque wealth gap; according to Forbes, the top richest 400 billionaires have accumulated the same wealth as the poorest 64% in America. That is roughly the wealth of 244 million Americans that 400 people single-handedly own. The wealth gap in America has also doubled from 1989 to 2016, according to the Pew Research Center. From 1970 to 2018, the median middle-class income increased from \$58,100 to \$86,600, a gain of 49%. By comparison, the median income for upper-tier households grew 64% over that time, from \$126,100 to \$207,400.

The wealth gap continues to increase every year and it affects Black and Hispanic Americans the hardest, according to research by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis (FRBSTL). Since nearly 1989, the national racial wealth gap has largely remained unchanged. In 2016, the average white family had ten times the wealth of a Black family and seven times the wealth of a Hispanic family. A large part of this is due to the fact that these people of color



**Meha Patel**

She/Her

Junior

Neuroscience

have been discriminated against buying homes and robbed of other opportunities that have always been present for white people.

Out of the 614 billionaires that currently exist in America, only seven—or 0.2%—are Black, according to FRBSTL, while Black people make up 13% of the national population. White people in America have had a 400 year head start that is intensifying the wealth gap as the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. As the top 1% continues to accumulate a massive amount of wealth, it brings us back to an important event in history. One of the reasons for the French Revolution was the economic strife—where prices and taxes skyrocketed after two decades of poor harvest, according to the History Channel. Currently the pandemic has brought on our own economic strife in America, as

unemployment surges and, according to The New York Times, close to 40 million people have claimed unemployment. Yet bills, taxes and expenses are still expected to be paid.

Unemployment relief has been an aid to many, but businesses are now starting to open up with limited hours—meaning workers are forced to return, only to earn less than they would on relief. Small businesses have also



suffered without a steady income and were forced to shut down, while billionaires were given tax breaks according to ProPublica. Six months into the pandemic, unemployment is still very high and American citizens are suffering.

Just as the French revolted against Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, could our wealth gap also bring forth a similar revolution against American billionaires?

Government policies also play a huge role in enabling billionaires. A famous yet controversial practice beloved by many Conservatives is the concept of “trickle-down economics.” Journalist Will Kenton from Investopedia details this theory as tax breaks and benefits for corporations and the wealthy that will stimulate economic growth and the wealth will “trickle down” to everyone else.

This theory is based on two assumptions: all members of society will benefit from growth, and that growth is most likely to come from people with the resources and skills to increase productive output. In practice, this theory typically increases wealth of the already wealthy; they often hoard their gains instead of spending it and creating more jobs—which does the opposite of stimulating economic growth. Even though the Republican party has historically enforced this theory while in office—like President Reagan, and the federal debt had nearly tripled according to Kim Amadeo from The Balance—it is being enforced again by President Trump, even though it has proven not to be effective.

Billionaires also pride themselves on donating their money to charity but the reality is that they give less, relative to their wealth, than an average American does according to Fox Business. For example, Jeff Bezos, who was worth \$160 billion in 2018, gave approximately \$131 million to charity, which is a mere 0.1% of his total fortune. Other billionaires such as Warren Buffett, who was worth \$88 billion in 2018, gave \$3.4 billion to charity, which is about 3.9% of his wealth. There are countless other billionaires who have donated money that has barely made a dent in their wealth and oftentimes, they earn that money back faster than the transaction takes to process. They work on the symptoms by donating the money, but never try to cure it with their wealth.

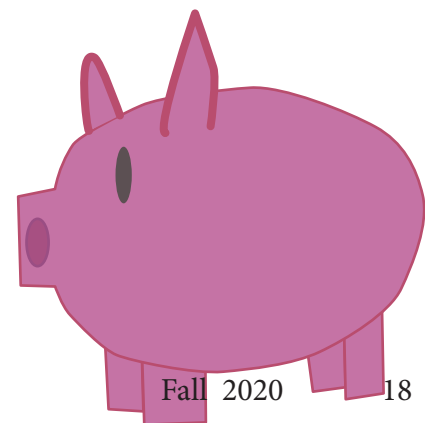
Many argue that billionaires have earned their way to the top and deserve the wealth they have accumulated, however they exploit workers by paying the minimum wage and perpetuating harsh conditions. According to Market Insider, America's large companies like Walmart, Amazon and Disney have been accused of exploiting their workers and for not paying them a livable wage. The average salary of an American in 2019 was \$44,720, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, while Bezos earns \$2,219 every second. It takes him just a little over 20 seconds to earn the average American salary. Capitalism, a man-made construct, inevitably creates billionaires while the majority starves.

While Bezos makes money just sitting, Amazon

workers have spoken out against the company for making them work like robots and not providing them with the adequate breaks that they need according to Time Magazine. Even during the pandemic, as outbreaks occurred in Amazon distribution centers, workers continued to work. The exploitation that billionaires rely on occurs not only in the U.S., but also in many eastern countries. Many American and European garment industries rely on Bangladeshi workers, according to Hindustan Times, where they barely make a livable wage and are forced into hazardous conditions. Since March, many fast fashion industries have cancelled billions of dollars in orders, which has put millions of these people on the streets. As the CEOs of large companies have been able to survive comfortably during the pandemic, it has devastated the lives of those who helped them get there.

Billionaires are responsible for hoarding a massive amount of wealth that builds up over generations and stays within families. This money is used to obtain more wealth and is not put into communities where it is needed. Billionaires are seen as the elite product of the American dream, but is it really a dream if it is hurting more people than it is helping?

“They work on the symptoms by donating money, but never try to cure it with wealth”





# THE MACRO PROBLEM

## OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

### *in Education*

When I am in a crowd at Saint Louis University, I stand out because of my hijab. However, it is only because of my hijab. My identity—thoughts, feelings, fears and passions—are not recognized. This is not uncommon; in schools without inclusive, culturally affirming practices, minority students are identified only as their race, religion or ethnicity. This sets the stage for microaggressions to become deeply embedded in our education system, leaving minority students ignored, unheard and set up for lower education outcomes.

Education is a fundamental tool in our society which helps an individual cultivate skills to lead a successful future. Although the goal of education is to be fair and help all students, there is a roadblock that hinders this: microaggressions. According to Derald Wing Sue, a professor of Psychology and Education at Columbia University, microaggressions are defined as “everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”

Microaggressions are more than just having your feelings hurt. They have long term effects which result in people feeling invalidated and ostracized due to another’s power and privilege. Ultimately, these actions feed into the dangerous cycle of racism and discrimination. Districts, schools and teachers are the sources of these microaggressions during formative school years and without addressing this issue, students of minority groups will suffer the long-term detrimental effects of these actions.

Before addressing microaggressions at the school and teacher levels, it is important to recognize the nature of educational inequality in America. The Brookings Institution shows that school districts with higher concentrations of low income and minority students have fewer resources, lower teacher qualifications and inadequate curricula. In an analysis of 900 Texas school districts, Harvard economist Ronald Ferguson found that teachers’ expertise—as measured by scores on a licensing examination, possession of master’s degrees and years of experience—was the single most important determinant



**Maaria Firdaus**

She/Her  
First-Year  
Investigative Medical Sciences

of student achievement, accounting for roughly 40% of the measured variance in students’ reading and math achievement gains in grades one through twelve.

After controlling for socioeconomic status, Ferguson concluded that the large disparities in achievement between Black and white students were almost entirely due to differences in the qualifications of their teachers. Unfortunately, this has a major negative impact on minority students’ educational outcomes and performances on national exams, leading to higher dropout rates. Possible solutions at the district level can start with reallocating resources from higher administration toward guaranteeing more qualified teachers and effective curricula, as some districts in New York and California have done. Personnel matters; By spending less money on Deans and law enforcement, and more on social-emotional support, guidance counselors and teacher training, this can lead to a greater investment in students and their future prospects.

Besides the unequal educational opportunities, minority students also face the brunt of school policies which directly ostracize them and hinder their academic performance. Schools follow the curriculum paradigm of academic or ability tracking, which, according to the Association for Curriculum and Supervision Development (ACSD), was implemented after an influx of immigrant children came in the early 20th century. School administrators decided to place students in different groups—or “tracks”—primarily on the basis of test results or their past performance in school.

However, this curriculum puts minority students at a significant disadvantage as they are not equipped with the resources and proper teachers to match that of a privileged student. ACSD finds, as many studies confirm, that minority and low-income students of all ability levels are overrepresented in the lower tracks and underrepresented



in the higher ones.

Educational systems should begin dismantling the use of academic tracking as it perpetuates a cycle of separating students by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. By creating a heterogeneous grouping of students and hiring teachers that are qualified to instruct effective curricula, this will ensure that every student will receive an enriched education and is not told they cannot succeed due to their background.

Although academic tracking implicitly affects a student's ability to attain a proper education, policies such as "Zero Tolerance"—wherein predetermined consequences are made in response to student misbehavior—can affect a student's ability to finish their education. The Zero Tolerance policy was mandated as a way to limit school violence, however, recent data by the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Policy Taskforce has shown that these mandates have increased dropout numbers, suspensions and expulsions among African American and Hispanic student populations. Unfortunately, minority students are usually the ones under scrutiny of this policy and face the harshest disciplinary actions from the school. These policies continue to serve as microaggressions in the educational system as expulsions and suspensions result in higher dropout rates and further perpetuate racial disparities.

Ultimately, because minority students are not in the dominant social group in school, they are subject to the microaggressions that others inadvertently perpetuated and are led down the track of lower educational outcomes. These students have to not only navigate microaggressions but maintain a polite temperament to anyone who—intentionally or not—hurts them.

There is hope through education reform that is centered in valuing culture. According to a study conducted by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, implementing "culturally affirming education where one's background, culture, and experiences are not accommodated instead respected and valued will help students positively see themselves and their racial identities. If districts, schools and teachers start honoring the legacies, historical and contemporary contributions of students' racial groups this will help improve the effects of microaggressions."

Microaggressions that embed themselves within education hurt students long after they graduate. Dr. Joy Bradford, a licensed psychologist, speaker, and host of mental health podcast "Therapy for Black Girls" said, "The experience of having to question whether something happened to you because of your race or constantly being on edge because your environment is hostile can often leave people feeling invisible, silenced, angry, and resentful". According to a study conducted by professors at the University of California that examined campus

racial climate and the effects of microaggressions on African American students, it showed that they experienced increased rates of depression, stress, anxiety, self-doubt and isolation that impacted their education as a result.

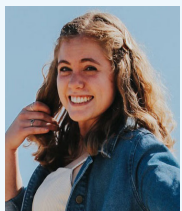
HR expert Avery Francis said, "Microaggressions feel like death by a thousand counts that really chip away at your self worth, and it's harder because the instances seem so small". However, all these small actions create a sinister pattern of discrimination and racism that negatively impacts students of minority backgrounds. Although educational inequality plays a major role in providing equal opportunities to students, systematic reform can be done through schools and districts by allocating funding to the right personnel, opting for heterogeneous grouping of students, reforming disciplinary policies and implementing culturally affirming educational curricula. By informing people about the dangers of microaggressions prevalent in the American school system, we can facilitate discussion that will help students' mental health and allow them to succeed in their future endeavors.

*"You're  
not like  
the rest  
of them"*



# DEAR PRIVILEGED PEOPLE...

## YOU HAVE TO LOOK AROUND



**Lexi Kayser**

She/Her

Junior

Research Intensive English,  
Journalism and Media Studies

Growing up, the Fourth of July was one of my favorite days of the year. My family would have giant backyard parties with all of our friends, everyone decked out in matching Old Navy shirts donning the American flag. Someone would make that cake with whipped cream and berries decorated to look like the star spangled banner. Everyone was in good spirits, proud to be an American, proud to be free until the next day when they would inevitably have to slip back into the corporate rat race. There were always fireworks, bursting red-white-and-beautiful over our safe suburban paradise. That was my favorite part--seeing everything all lit up--my whole world as I knew it illuminated by this promise that I was going to grow up and be just fine.

I was an American, after all. I never had to worry about where my next meal was going to come from or if I was going to have money to buy school supplies. I was an American, and my parents had worked hard to give me a nice house with a nice family to take me to my nice school. I was an American, and that meant summer road trips into the National Parks and winter breaks floating in the Florida Gulf. I was an American, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance every day with the school bell, reading my poems about patriotism at the fifth grade Veteran's Day assembly.

I assumed, for the first thirteen-or-so years of my life, that this security I had was due to the country that I lived in. In the United States of America, anything was possible for anybody.

I swallowed the death of my American Dream like my innocence, as bitter pills that always seemed to catch in the back of my throat. Once I gained a sense of self-awareness and the ability to form my own independent thought, I found myself growing angry with the injustices that seemed so apparent all around me. It didn't make sense to me that the areas of my city deemed "bad" by white peers were primarily Black neighborhoods. I didn't find it fair that thousands of suburbanites would cram into Busch Stadium to spend hundreds of dollars at a Cardinal's Game, while the hundreds of unhomed folks on the streets offered a very different picture of my city's circumstance.

This ascent into political awareness was one that

happened mostly in private, New York Times editorials clinging to my dimmed phone screen as Fox News blared across the living room. As the picture came into focus, I found I was living in an alternate reality from those around me. In my America, my LGBTQ+ friends were afraid to be themselves, boys in AP Government talked over me, Black people were being murdered in the streets and school children were being murdered in their schools. In the deeply conservative America that surrounded me, it was still fireworks and baseball and "good Christian values" that only applied to women's bodies at Planned Parenthood, the same bodies that were being catcalled the night before.

Before, my view of my country was corroded by privilege and naivety. I was, as many Americans are, stuck inside of my own orbit. It took work to come out of the shadows, and that work continues to be demeaned by those who have yet to do it.

On July 4, 2020, President Donald Trump gave a speech at Mount Rushmore in which he said, "Against every law of society and nature, our children are taught in school to hate their own country, and to believe that the men and women who built it were not heroes, but they were villains. The radical view of American history is a web of lies — all perspective is removed, every virtue is obscured, every motive is twisted, every fact is distorted, and every flaw is magnified until the history is purged and the record is disfigured beyond all recognition."

A few days later, Fox News host Tucker Carlson would add his own voice to the narrative, boldly commenting that the left can not lead the United States of America because "they despise it".

I don't hate the America of my childhood, the America in my backyard, the America of Nashville music and Colorado mountains and New York lights. I don't think anybody hates that America.

But the problem is, that isn't the entirety of America. 44 million people in the U.S. live without health insurance, according to PBS.

Over 2 million people are incarcerated in the United States, making up 25% of the world's incarcerated population, according to the Prison Policy Index. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People compounds this information with the fact that one out of every three Black boys born can expect to be sentenced to prison, compared to only one out of every 17 white boys.

The World Population Review found that the U.S. has the second highest rate of gun violence in the world--and gun violence is the leading cause of death for Black



children and teens.

Feelings aside, these numbers are indicative of the facts. Privileged people: it is time to take off our rose-tinted glasses and face them. We are only as strong as our weakest link, and the reality is, our chain has been breaking for longer than we've chosen to acknowledge. Many of us are addicted to the image of America that we were force fed in grade school. We love the idea of a happy ending. It is far easier to pretend that racism ended with Martin Luther King Jr. than to admit that he was murdered for the fight we now praise him for--but the time has come for us to look beyond the perfectly curated safety of our suburbs and stare it in the eye.

So many people cling to this blind patriotism because the American Dream is a fantasy that they never had to grow out of. To people who, like I once did, tie up so much of their identity in this flawless depiction of their country, losing it can feel like losing pieces of themselves. It can seem unnecessary or even unsafe, which whistles to these fearful cries that anyone suggesting change "hates" our country. Any criticism of America is immediately personalized, and the leap to defend it becomes as innate as defending a family member or old friend.

It isn't just the white upper-class that experiences this. The World Value Survey found that an astounding 100% of the lowest American income group indicate feeling either "very" or "quite" proud of their country; even those disadvantaged because of it seem to have a profound connection to it.

In an article for The Guardian, sociology professor Francesco Duina further examined this idea of patriotism as a self-identifier. A series of interviews with folks in the lower-working class revealed that being American is a shred of dignity for even those hardest on their luck to cling to. The principles outlined in our Pledge of Allegiance, which many of us grow up reciting every day, offer a vision of hope and prosperity: "liberty and justice for all."

But there has to come a time when we are no longer content with the facade. The withdrawals are painful, but it is better than spending our entire lives chasing a rhetor-

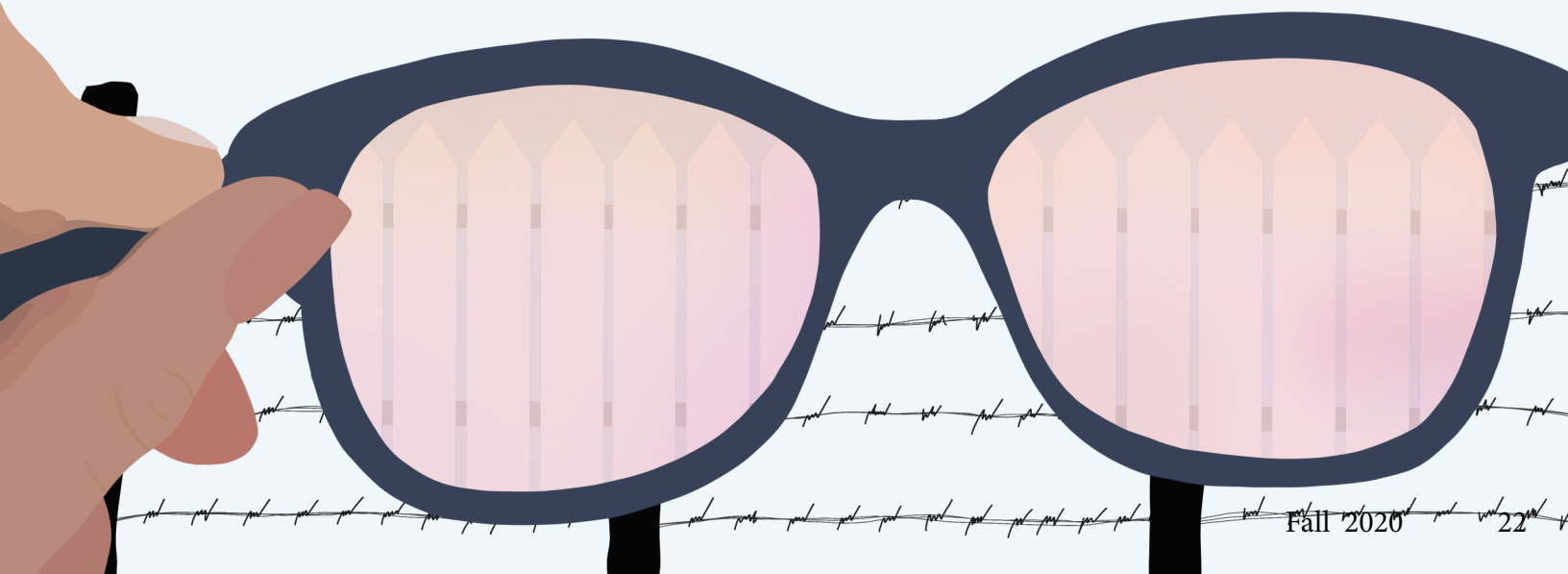
ical high that leaves millions marginalized once the smoke clears.

When you love something, truly love it, you look at all of it. You look at the messy bits and the chipped edges, and you try to put them back together, even if it might be uncomfortable, even if you might cut your hand on the glass. Love, to me, is not abandoning that vision of America, but instead, expanding it. You can not love your country because of the opportunities it has given you, then look down upon people who dislike your country for denying them those same opportunities.

I am grateful for the luck that I have had, but I am also angry at it; I will be proud to be an American when the same system that works for me works for everybody. Until then, through active allyship, I am trying to understand what it means to be an American--beyond the backyards and barbeques that once dominated my definition. What is America to a Black transwoman, to an immigrant father, to a Muslim girl? What is America to the residents of the most violent block of the city, and what is America to a waitress working three jobs to pay the bills? What America is to every American is what America has become to me.

So, people of privilege, I challenge you to face the withdrawals head on. Mourn the loss of your blind innocence, but mobilize that brilliant anger that brews deep inside of your bones. We aren't rewriting American history. We're recovering it, so that pledge that we recited in school, "One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all," is finally true.

I still hold those Fourth of July parties fondly in my mind, but now, I put my loyalty in concepts, not countries. I've realized as I've grown that the celebration should have never been for an already "perfect union"; our Constitution itself encourages the formation of a "more perfect union." Being American today should be less about fussing over the word "perfect" and more about fighting for the word "more."



# is cancel culture **CANCELLED?**

**CONTENT WARNING:** Suicide

Do you ever do that thing where right as you are about to go to bed, you are suddenly reminded of every single mistake you have ever made? That time you got sent to the principal's office in 1st grade? Or when you shoved your brother's legos into a bird house after he was mean to you? Or when you openly rolled your eyes at your art teacher in 6th grade?

While these are relatively minor examples, we have all certainly made mistakes. Sometimes, we learn from these mistakes and strive to do better. Sometimes, the past haunts us in our dreams for decades. Sometimes we are "cancelled" for our mistakes - shamed on social media, fired from a job and ostracized from friends.

Given our present circumstances, the question of interest is not whether cancelling is good or bad; in fact, comedian John Oliver from Last Week Tonight in 2019 stated that when well-directed, a lot of good can result from public shaming. Our job, as humans who participate and are subject to both "cancel culture" and cancelling, is to determine whether it is an effective and appropriate course of action when working toward social justice. Are we holding institutions accountable, or are we simply piling upon people who don't necessarily know what they are doing are wrong?

According to Cheryl Bond-Nelms with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the



**Reed McLeen**

She/Her

Junior

Musical Theatre Performance  
and Economics

Montgomery Bus Boycott was one of the first manifestations of "cancelling" that rejected racial segregation on public transportation. There was also a widespread campaign in the 1960s in Birmingham, Alabama to boycott businesses that only hired white people or had segregated restrooms. Due to these epochal events, the U.S. Supreme Court declared bus segregation unconstitutional, thus beginning the removal of Jim Crow laws. Both the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Birmingham Campaign were successful practices of "cancelling" that held institutional bodies accountable for their racist actions and called for restorative societal intervention.

Since the Civil Rights Movement of the early 20th century, the nature and effectiveness of "cancelling" has evolved significantly into what some might call a "cancel culture." Vox defines contemporary cancel culture as a reaction to a person that has resulted in something of disapproval, either seriously or facetiously. Cancel culture has essentially meant the transformation from cancelling ideologies and institutions to cancelling human beings.

In June of 2020, Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling posted an alarming tweet that evoked transphobic sentiments, according to The Scotsman. In response to a Devex opinion piece entitled, "Creating a more equal post-COVID-19 world for people who menstruate," the author tweeted, "People who menstruate.' I'm sure there used to be a word for those people. Someone help me out. Wumben? Wimpund? Woomud?"

Immediately, the renowned author received immense backlash. Rowling defended her remarks by tweeting, "I know and love trans people, but erasing the concept of sex removes the ability of many to meaningfully discuss their lives. It isn't hate to speak the truth."

It is worth emphasizing that these events transpired entirely via Twitter, a social media platform that allows us to voice our opinions to the public at our fingertips. According to Jon Ronson - a British-American journalist known for his investigations into controversial topics of politics and





science - the content shared and viewed on social media can be “customized by each user, creating an individualized mutual approval machine for personal beliefs.”

That said, the capacity for social media to serve as a mutual approval machine has both positive and negative implications. In regard to Rowling’s tweet, the public effectively practiced cancelling via social media. Because the author’s behavior had surpassed acceptable limits, the public called for the dismantling of Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) ideologies on Twitter and by Rowling. This warranted outcome was absolutely essential in upholding the dignity of members of the LGBTQ+ community and keeping Rowling accountable for her flawed beliefs, but there were also negative implications. An immense number of tweets called for Rowling to either kill herself or expect someone else to, according to The Scotsman.

Essentially, the situation intensified from cancelling Rowling’s harmful ideology to cancelling Rowling as a human being entirely. There is a difference between cancelling one’s humanity and cancelling one’s ideology. The innate humanity, otherwise known as human dignity, gives a person worth. No one can alter or take away another’s humanity; in contrast, ideology is what influences the opinions and behaviors of a person. Ideological impacts occur at institutional levels, such as churches, family units, schools and government organizations. Therefore it is the underlying, heinous ideological influences from societal institutions that must be cancelled, rather than someone’s humanity.

According to Jon Ronson, cancel culture programs us to value ideology over humanity rather than humanity over ideology. Ideology has always wedged people against one another, but cancel culture enhances the divide.

Ronson asserts that cancelling the ideology of another person embraces accountability and progress, and makes sure that powerful members of institutions do not perpetuate hateful ideologies; for example, the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 and the Birmingham Campaign of 1963 were centered around boycotting racist ideologies at an institutional level. There is value in holding individuals and entire systems responsible, as this makes change effective.

However, we have to be humane about how we cancel. In my opinion, Rowling’s understanding of “womanhood” is intolerant and beyond offensive; however, that doesn’t mean I think she should be killed. We need to cancel responsibly: Allowing backlash to reform institutions but not encourage suicide in other humans. Push them out of a job, force them to learn and hold them accountable, but suicide is an inhumane extreme. Humans have dignity and worth, even if they have severely flawed opinions.

All things considered, it is much easier to call out someone’s intolerance rather than call them into a

conversation about why they are wrong.

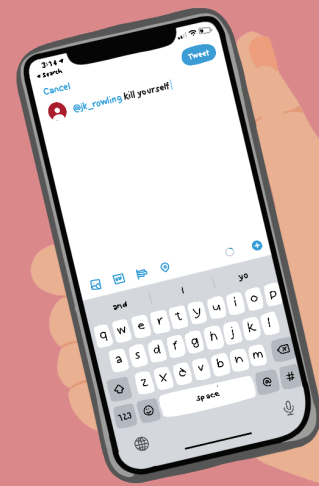
It is much easier to tweet how horrible Rowling is for her opinions, rather than intervene and examine the institutions that allow members of society to maintain these opinions; however, we must refuse to degrade the humanity of one another and examine the nature of the institutions. I am not advocating for the elimination of cancelling, rather for a productive reorientation of the current culture to return to the ideals of those civil rights protesters.

This approach requires compassion, understanding and willingness to listen and strive to do better. These are difficult to achieve amidst disagreement, but they are not entirely unattainable. Dr. Bernice King, the youngest daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said in a 2020 TED podcast that our country needs a revolution of values in order to bring about effective change to racial equality and justice. King believes:

“We’ve got to deconstruct the way in which we see people and deconstruct the way in which we operate, practice and engage and set policy. And so I believe that there’s a lot of heart, h-e-a-r-t work to do, in the midst of all the h-a-r-d, hard work to do. Because heart work is hard work.”

While Dr. King’s message is about racial equality, her sentiments are nonetheless applicable to responsible cancelling. Disagreements are inevitable, and mistakes will be made, but we must channel our flaws and clashes to constantly learn and strive to do better. The cancelling of Rowling was good and effective - right up until it advocated for suicide. Surely, there is a productive medium that we can find. We must fuel our disagreement to cancel the institutions that instill such harmful ideologies - hold them accountable and make them improve - rather than cancel the people who are still learning.

We must do the heart work. We must do the hard work.



# Getting the Second Marshmallow: Public Health, Marginalization and the Pandemic

In the late 1700s, Philadelphia's yellow fever outbreak was declared an epidemic. It was claimed, according to a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Dr. Benjamin Rush, that Black people were immune to the disease and had to stay in the city to take care of the sick. Dr. Rush and other physicians believed that yellow fever originated in Africa or within the West Indies. While many members of the enslaved population may have been immune due to previous exposure, many more died contracting it before herd immunity was established, according to Sarah Pruitt of the History Network.

Racial biases of disease susceptibility have been used to justify all sorts of medical malpractice and marginalization, such as gynecological experiments on Black women, the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiment and the withholding of medicine from immigrants during the Spanish Flu, all according to *The New York Times*. In fact, public health biases have been built into the structure of America and, despite our believed exceptionalism, this marginalization has become painfully clear during COVID-19.

The pandemic has shown how American public health systems have been developed to disadvantage marginalized people while maintaining silence in the privileged. According to an article from Harvard Medicine, many minority populations such as Black, Native and Hispanic populations have a high incidence of COVID-19, correlating with comorbidity baseline health issues such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, hazardous environmental living, poor diets and work conditions. To simply assume that these outcomes are due to personal choices would be surface-level and incorrect, as these disparities are symptomatic of the perpetuation of public health marginalization throughout the history of the U.S.

The social implications of being a marginalized person in America have health effects. According to a primary care and HIV physician, Dr. Oni Blackstock, "The stresses of living in a world where you are continually demeaned in small ways and large has an effect on the body. That is part of the experience."

Dr. Blackstock stated that alarmingly, the chronic and acute stress of historical trauma can be passed down through epigenetic inheritance, thus leading to underlying conditions in "healthy" marginalized populations as well as increased risk of developing COVID-19. What is profound about this acceptance of stress, latent or not, is that marginalized people undergo these negative experiences simply because they are marginalized. This speaks volumes about the disparities present in the public health system in the U.S.

A belief that has been held for centuries



**Tanya Joseph**

She/Her

Junior

Neuroscience and  
Biology

among its people and onlookers—that the U.S. is a beacon of hope, of strength, of possibility—has been shattered by what Pew Research Center journalist Michael Ollove calls America's "uniquely hapless, ineffective, undisciplined and selfish" response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our country's response to the pandemic has been atrocious, and the apathy toward victims, the dismissal of advice from experts in public health and health care and the disregard for others in the community and nation as a whole has hindered America's ability to be great. Instead, it has the greatest number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), despite not having the largest or most dense population.

Americans value freedom and emphasize the notion of "I" over "we," thus many lack the sense of community—an incredibly necessary value—to combat this pandemic. The notion that individualism is a core value of American culture has allowed for the U.S. to flourish in years past, but has simultaneously obstructed our ability to implement equitable public health practices for marginalized people.

Without a doubt, having a sense of individualism is important in cases pertaining to innovation and economic growth. However, for the sake of the country—for which some are so patriotic—why is it that people feel they can infringe upon the right to safety of others by blatantly disregarding public health officials and putting others at risk? If you respect other people's personal liberties, why are you treating public health as a choice? When individualism begins to harm others, values must be re-evaluated.

Marginalization in public health occurs largely because Americans have different opinions







on changing our medical systems—they are either individualists or critics when it comes to change. Today, for instance, hearing or seeing the phrase “Make America Great Again,” causes vastly polarized views regarding the concept of “change” to emerge.

One view on change deals with the notion that America has maintained its core principles at the expense of disadvantaged members of its population and must fundamentally alter its values in order to better the lives of its people as a whole. This is apparent in movements that promote the dismantling of intertwined foundational systems created by and for a privileged and powerful few.

The “other side” of sorts, argues that this nation’s values and traditionalism must be preserved, thus keeping the status quo to maintain “order” and harmony. According to this second view, things were better in years past. But this is only true for them—a select, privileged few.

Proponents of this latter perspective fervently believe that America has been, is and will always be exceptional, with honor and patriotism being key factors in identifying oneself as an American. These individuals believe that criticism of the U.S., particularly on the COVID-19 response, is a disrespectful betrayal of the country and is simply untrue.

But James Baldwin, author and notable civil rights activist, said, “I love America more than any other country in the world and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.” America is a great country, but it is very far from perfect. The rigidity with which some “patriots” refuse change and, to an extent, promote nationalism and blindly follow leaders without question, leads to stagnation and regression into a society that benefits very few. This nostalgic idea is in stark contrast to adherents of the former perspective of an unexceptional nation, prideful on the road to its downfall without initiating and even entertaining ideas of necessary social change. Simply put, unless we constructively criticize our public health systems and standards, they will not change for the better for the marginalized members of our nation. The priority of personal freedoms in balance with public health must be reevaluated for the good of the whole—especially marginalized people. This can be done by recognizing the difference between instant and delayed gratification.

Psychologist Walter Mischel of Stanford’s Marshmallow Experiment comes to mind with regard to America’s response to the pandemic. In the study, children choose whether to have a marshmallow

immediately or wait and receive an additional marshmallow later. By delaying gratification, children were rewarded doubly.

This is analogous to COVID-19 precautions. We can each take the marshmallow now—instantly gratifying ourselves and avoiding public health regulations. Or we can wait for two marshmallows later; the eradication of virus and the construction of more equitable, community-driven public health. Putting aside personal freedoms temporarily will lead to a safer and less prolonged COVID-19 experience.

The pandemic has fundamentally altered life as we know it and will continue to do so. People are frustrated about mask-wearing, social-distancing and disruptions to the world as we knew it brought on by this virus. Understandably, people are concerned about unemployment, educational downfalls of technology, the decline of mental health and socializing with loved ones in person.

What must be realized, however, is that unselfish actions must be taken and creative solutions need to be generated for the sake of others, the future and resumption of a better kind of “normal” life. COVID-19 unveiled the systemic racism, lack of social safety nets and other problems present in health care for marginalized people in America to society at large.

One example is that COVID-19 has unmasked disparities present within the for-profit health care system of the U.S. People can receive health insurance through public programs, their employer, or may pay out-of-pocket for expenses. According to a research study published by the Taylor & Francis Group of Informa UK, the cost for COVID-19 treatment is upwards of \$30,000 out of pocket and, since over 500,000 Americans already file for bankruptcy each year due to medical bills, COVID-19 only intensifies fear of seeking treatment.

It took a pandemic for many people to notice that the flaws within America have been ingrained in the founding, the culture, the privilege, the sustainability of “tradition” for the sake of a select few in power and the patriotism of this country—all of which could not have been possible without marginalizing groups on the basis of race, gender, ability, sex or wealth. So, while people do want to return to how things were pre-pandemic, it is also our duty to address such issues that have been revealed and to take measures to fix systemic problems at the core of our nation’s public health.

Where is the regard for other people when we treat public health as a choice, wherein we are able to put the self first and disregard others for the sake of personal enjoyment? In order to truly make America great, we need to first recognize that it has been lacking true greatness since its conception. We must be more disciplined in following inclusive public health guidelines if we truly want to eventually move past this pandemic, and get our second marshmallow.

# KEY TO SURVIVING 2020? EDUCATION.



**Ashley Keller**

She/Her

Sophomore

Nursing

The state of our union is constantly changing. This year has been one of the most transformative, scary and important years in our country's history. How do we navigate the ever-changing status of our country, all the headlines, Instagram posts and word-of-mouth that creates constant stimulation? The answer is education; it is our individual responsibility to educate ourselves on past and contemporary issues before we can speak on, or more importantly, form an opinion about them.

There have been way too many Americans, especially politicians and celebrities, that have spoken on an issue that they are not fully informed about. This is dangerous and unfortunately all too familiar. The spread of false information and uninformed perspectives by people with platforms can influence their followers to potentially use their vote and voice to cause harm to others. For example, President Trump in the early days of COVID-19, as well as six months into it, has continued to spread false information and make uninformed claims about the virus. This has caused many Americans to refuse to wear masks and protect others, and has caused even more political polarity in our country.

According to the Atlantic on February 7, President Trump claimed the virus would weaken "when we get into April, in the warmer weather - that has a very negative effect on that, and that type of a virus." This statement was completely false and backed with no scientific evidence. What is really alarming about these continuous false claims by President Trump is that he has access to information from the smartest and most qualified medical professionals in the country and has still chosen to spread his false opinions on a large platform. This proves that not only do American citizens need to educate and inform themselves, but so does our President.

Most Americans have received some type of education, either from high school, college or even higher

education like a Masters or Doctorate. That does not mean that we are "educated"; education is a constant state of learning that never stops. I know and know of many people who have attended some of the most prestigious universities in our country that still have outdated beliefs. The only way to combat this phenomenon is to continuously inform yourself about the changing world and accept it.

School is still so important because it shapes our mind and skills for the next stages in our life, and the things we learn are valuable. But not all the information we are taught in school is correct. Maybe the information was thought to be true at the time but has since changed. The religious orientation of the school can also affect the information, as well as the region. For instance, in Louisiana, where my father grew up, they were taught that the Confederacy won the Civil War. Something that most people learned in elementary school was that Thanksgiving was a peaceful dinner between the Native Americans and pilgrims, when actually, it was a celebratory dinner of a massacre of Native Americans, according to the New York Times. It is shocking that even qualified institutions can teach false information.

The question that everyone has once they decide to educate themselves is "how do I do it?" Well, any daily education like looking up a word you don't know, learning a little bit of a new language or listening to a TED Talk are great ways to start. Some advanced steps you can take are enrolling in a college course and journaling your questions and answers about information you encounter in your daily life. Once you start learning new things, you will be shocked by how much you did not know about the world and how things work in it. Everyday I am still amazed about how much there is to learn.

Another key aspect of self-education is finding valid and reliable sources. Many Americans make the mistake of believing information they read from social media,



blog posts or even advertisements. There are many ways to determine if you are reading, watching or listening to something from a credible source. One of the first things you should do is check who the author is and their credentials regarding the topic; make sure that there are sources—so that the story is not just opinion based—and that the publication is recent with information that is still relevant.

The most important thing to look for when you are reading an article, watching the news or listening to a podcast is bias. Bias, at least politically, means favoring a side. Some publications with a liberal bias are The Atlantic, CNN and The New York Times according to AllSides, whereas some publications with a conservative bias are The Wall Street Journal, FOX News and the New York Post. It is vital to understand that you cannot compare two sources simply because they have opposite biases, because one may not be as biased as the other. This is called false equivalence and it is a mistake that many Americans make when gathering information from both sides.

Try to find an unbiased source to compare with biased articles. Before you can form an opinion on a topic, you should check all the sources possible, both conservative and liberal, as well as neutral. Knowing all the sides and opinions of the story is crucial.

It is also vital to listen to those who have different beliefs than you, and not just prepare to tell them why they are wrong. Sometimes, you will find out that they have a thoughtful reason, research or context for their opinion, and it might even change yours.

Too often, we fall into what Psychology Today calls a

“confirmation bias,” which “occurs from the direct influence of desire on beliefs.” Many people in the U.S., young or old, use confirmation bias to back up their beliefs even when they aren’t factual. Instagram is a great example of confirmation bias. Many of my peers will repost a perspective that supports their beliefs that they may have only taken a second to read. I was shocked but not surprised when one of my mutuals recently posted a pro-life video that demonstrated the process of an abortion—the problem was that the video showed a full grown baby instead of a 12-24 week fetus. According to Planned Parenthood, abortions happen usually no later than 24 weeks. Posting false information like this is dangerous because people will believe it and spread it around. However, when you are informed about current issues you become able to identify false information and prevent it from reaching others.

Lastly, before you post or discuss a topic, make sure you know both sides of the story and are ready for the opposing side to disagree. This year especially, social media users, including myself, were reckless about what they posted to their pages. From black squares to fake news, it is time to do better for our country. The only way that we can improve as a country is to unlearn what we were taught, question what information is given to us and stay informed on current topics. Our time to change is now, and it starts with you.



# SELF LEARNING IN SCHOOLING:

## DOES THE GOOD OUTWEIGH THE BAD?

An extra-long spring break with eight people in one house? Sounds great! A five-month quarantine with eight people in one house? Not the best. An experience familiar to many of us college students, this was how my 2020 began. But now—finally—I can move into my new dorm on campus at school, away from my hometown, getting most of my freedom back that I lost and personal space for my own work—an all-around relieving feeling considering the situation. However, my parents and all my siblings still having a house of seven people, all busy with either full-time jobs or online schooling every day? Not the best at all.

With all the focus on how universities around America are handling online education and the outbreak of COVID-19 cases, there is more and more talk permeating conversations about said universities and all students who attend them. However, not all college students either go home or are actively hearing the stories behind the scenes of the younger half of this generation's education.

I have four younger siblings at home, so I gain an understanding on the extent of how the education of grades K-12 is being handled. In a family of eight, my younger siblings are very fortunate to share technology for their online classes. For younger children, especially those in their early adolescence, schooling is most effective through face-to-face instruction in a classroom according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, because an environment has significant impacts not only on their learning, but on social and emotional development as well.

Schools differ in area codes and whether they're private or public, so the number of resources varies, and as a result of this pandemic, resources are further distributed disproportionately—affecting a school's ability to provide an adequate education. With the changes being made to try and find the best possible solution for all

persons involved regarding online school, each day in a single week may be completely different from the next.

Although current college students are included in Generation Z, and COVID-19 has a profound effect on their learning and development, the focus on each level of education needs to be divided and understood in order to progress in the current circumstances.

There is no equating a 30-minute Zoom call to what is usually an eight-hour, fully interpersonal day of learning. Teachers have to put in more effort to fulfill their duties while unavoidable problems are being thrown into the mix constantly. It seems that the higher the grade, the more schools are trying to format a “normal” school day, because there seems to be more pressure on the older students to stay in tune with the curriculum. In the beginning of the official start of quarantine, this was the case for my two youngest siblings; a 30-minute Zoom once a day paired with solely self-taught homework was not beneficial or doable. How many 10-year-old kids do you know who can keep themselves on a strict schedule to get their homework done?

With the start of a new school year, my younger siblings who attend a small school with roughly 60 students in each grade had the option to attend a full school day, whereas my two siblings attending a larger public high school had one option to attend classes online three days a week. The complexity of figuring out a safe way for over 3,000 students to attend in-person classes at a large school does not compare to a smaller school that is seemingly almost fully fit to handle a pandemic. In larger schools, whether primary or secondary, it is no easy task keeping an incredibly close eye on every student walking through the busy hallways, or those in the communal style restrooms, as is possible at a small-scale school—especially when changes are happening day by day.

Roughly a month into the school year, my siblings who attend public high school found out over a



Unmute



Start Video



Invite



Participants





**Cate Simon**

She/Her

Sophomore

Neuroscience

weekend that starting the next week the students would come in a couple days per week for in-person classes, with the “flipped” set-up; a “normal” day of school now includes desks six feet apart, masks worn at all times and no clothing changes or activities requiring physical contact during gym class. There are designated hallways for which direction you need to walk, with separate up and down staircases. No one has the same high school experience for many reasons of course, but now it’s difficult for anyone to say they could imagine themselves in the shoes of any of these students.

No matter the situation, there is more pressure than ever on self-learning at home. The need for younger children to show the responsibility to complete every assignment, and thoroughly learn the material—potentially without help from another—introduces a whole new mentality of these children. The effort of both the teachers and students is critical and delving into extra resources for children falling behind—or even those working to advance ahead of their curriculum—can make a big difference. It is difficult enough for a student to catch up when falling behind in classwork, let alone reach out for extra help on their own. And now, without the same level of face-to-face interaction creating a personal relationship between students and their teacher, it is increasingly easier to fall behind, and the more likely it is to go unnoticed.

To keep up with the program of electronic learning, the requirement of technology needs constant management as it is unfair to expect every student to have the same level of access to technology required for online education. Whether the self-teaching is furthered through physical paperwork—such as tests and homework—with minimal instruction from teachers, or the technology needed is provided from the school, there has to be a workaround to create equal attainability.

The relationship between teachers and students

provided through the face-to-face interactions influences a child’s social development in a way online education cannot offer. The interpersonal bonds and attachment created at such a young age, strengthening with the growth of each student, impacts each child’s perspective on their own schooling. The determination, focus and responsibility given to a child to make the most out of their learning is reinforced by the duty to accomplish their best not only for themselves, but for their teacher and anyone with an influence on their education. When this relationship is no longer present, the influence can be lost. As a result of online schooling, children who are dependent on their educators are now “entirely reliant on their caregivers for nurturing care and to meet all their developmental needs,” says the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

The burdens online schooling puts onto families with young children differs across a spectrum; for a single-parent household or a household with full-time working guardians, the time and energy needed to be put into online learning may not be an option. Some children may be dependent on school-funded lunches for nutrition, the in-school interactions as the only conversational form of social development in their day or after-school tutoring sessions and day care resources. There is a range of burdens as a result of COVID-19 experienced by families that stretches between different communities and homes.

The impact online schooling has on children at a young age are mere assumptions because there is no way to know the long-term results until we live them in the future. In the current situation, decisions regarding school in the age of COVID-19 seem to be made by comparing whether or not the good outweighs the bad. What we do know, however, is that making good decisions for children in school now needs to be a priority.



Share Screen



Chat



More

Leave Meeting



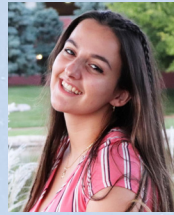
# HUMAN CONNECTION IN TIMES OF CHAOS

It's my freshman year and I'm walking around campus. It's one of my first days here at Saint Louis University and I'm very eager to make new friends. However, even as I strive to get to know people, I struggle to recognize them when I see them again and I'm not sure if they can even tell that I'm trying to be friendly. I find that new people have to introduce themselves repeatedly before I become aware that I have met them before. I also struggle to understand what my professors are trying to convey because I am unable to read their facial expressions. It becomes discouraging trying to seek connection with others when there is a physical barrier in our way, or more accurately, thousands: face masks.

Many students living on campus this year can relate to that frustration, especially those who haven't already made friends here in advance. My interactions left me with feelings of loneliness, disconnect and guilt because I wasn't able to relate to others in the depth that I usually would. It's even worse for students living off-campus. If they're lucky, they might be able to find friends through their Zoom classes but they won't have that face-to-face interaction that is so important in the process of connecting with each other.

Face masks aren't the only COVID-19 precaution that is making it harder for people to establish true interpersonal bonds. Social distancing, limits on group gatherings and the closing of many social spaces also contribute to this hole where our social lives used to be. How are we meant to make friends when we're expressly encouraged to stay away from each other? How do we balance the urge to give a struggling friend a hug with our obligation to social distance? Masks and social distancing disrupt regular human interaction and make it harder to connect with others. This is not to say that these precautions should not be followed. Without a doubt, it is extremely important that each of us follow these guidelines to the best of our ability to protect each individual's physical health and that of the world. However, we also need to keep in mind how these precautions might affect our mental and social health, as well as improvise to keep all three "healths" (physical, mental and social) in good standing and understand how they interact.

Brittney Wong, a writer for the Huffington Post, states that in many East Asian countries, it has been customary for years to wear face masks when you are not feeling well. This is to



**Catherine Lund-Molfese**

She/Her

First-Year

Human Resources  
Management

protect others from any potentially infectious illness you might be carrying. Before COVID-19, this would have seemed like a foreign concept in the United States, but now it just seems like common sense.

Why wasn't this practice followed all over the world

before the pandemic? Imagine how much the spread of the disease could have been slowed if mask-wearing was common practice in pre-pandemic times. There is a clear difference in the balance between individual rights and the common good in these East Asian countries compared to the United States. This highlights the common American mindset of "everyone for themselves"; they are often more concerned about their own needs and ideas than those of the community.

Wearing masks disrupts

our interactions, but things changed even more by people who refused to wear masks. Seeing groups of people not following precautions during a pandemic, prompts a myriad of questions. Do they just not care about those around them? Do they realize that their actions could cause someone at risk to become seriously ill or even die? It makes sense that individuals who are not being socially conscious during this time are avoided by others—not only because their choices suggest questionable morals, but because they are legitimately less safe to be around due to their greater exposure.

Certain groups were affected by the pandemic in ways many people don't usually think about, mainly individuals in isolation, giving birth, in the deaf and hard of hearing communities and with mental health needs.

When mandatory stay-at-home orders went into effect in many states, most people sought comfort in those closest to them who they were quarantined with, but not everyone had company. Individuals who live alone found themselves completely physically cut off from everyone else. It was hard enough to be stuck in a house with others for months, but could have been just as bad—if not worse—to be going through it alone.





Second, childbirth is an extremely sensitive time in anyone's life, but COVID-19 has dramatically changed the way it looks. As Christina Capatides and Caitlin O'Kane of CBS News state, "Due to the rapidly spreading Coronavirus pandemic, [people] across the United States are finding themselves forced to go through labor and delivery alone – a reality that, for many, would have once been unthinkable." Hospitals took this precaution to reduce the number of people inside and thereby reduce the spread of COVID-19. This was undoubtedly mentally and emotionally taxing for both the parents and their families.

Another group the pandemic affected, by mask-wearing mandates specifically, is the deaf and hard of hearing community. New York Post writer Hannah Sparks says that "the deaf and hard of hearing often rely on lip-reading to communicate, proving face masks, now required in most states, to be a source of anxiety, stress and confusion." Not only do face masks pose a significant logistical obstacle in communication for those hard of hearing, it also causes anxiety and can prompt mental health struggles—another issue intensified by the pandemic.

For many who struggle with mental illness, and maintaining stable mental health, it can be extremely difficult to ask for help. The fact that mental health services moved to mostly online appointments due to COVID-19 adds another layer of difficulty to asking for help. When considering how badly affected the elderly and those with compromised immune systems are during this time, it is easy to feel selfish for attempting to seek a doctor's help. However, caring for your health has never been more important and reaching out to a doctor during a mental health crisis is critical.

Social interaction is important to both our mental and physical health and the threat that COVID-19 has laid upon it is not to be taken lightly. Megan McCluskey, a writer for Time Magazine used the following quote from professor Paul Zak of Claremont Graduate University: "when we're touched [in a positive way], a cascade of events happens in the brain and one of the important ones is the release of a neurochemical called oxytocin," he says, reiterating that this process reduces stress and improves immunity. "That's super valuable in a time of pandemic." Being physically close to others not only calms us down, but also changes the balance of chemicals in our brain and improves general immunity. In an article for The New York Times, personal health columnist Jane Brody shared that, "dozens of studies have shown that people who have satisfying relationships with family,

friends and their community are happier, have fewer health problems, and live longer."

Being with others doesn't just improve a person's general well-being, it can actually improve their lifespan. Brody goes on to share that good social ties do more for longevity than healthy habits; they even seemed to overrule accompanying unhealthy patterns. Luckily, with today's technology it is impossible for the pandemic to cut social interaction off completely, but people must learn to use it in new ways and make an effort to stay connected and maintain good social ties.

The outpouring of online alternatives to usual social practices has been extremely heartwarming. There are plenty of options to help every person stay socially involved. Some huge stars have online concerts, including Sam Smith, Avril Lavigne, BTS and Machine Gun Kelly. Others have been using Instagram Live to share everything from dance lessons to culinary tips to workout routines— all without charge. Doctors quickly began offering "telehealth" visits; they function just like a normal doctor's visit but over the phone or, more commonly, through video. Dating continued via Zoom dates and hundreds of websites quickly jumped up to offer helpful tips on how to have a successful online date.

Fun in-person and socially distanced activities include outdoor hide-and-seek, picnics with adequate spacing and scavenger or landmark hunts. McCluskey emphasizes the importance of recognizing online conversations as real conversations with real people, not just a screen. It can be easy to sit through a Zoom class as if it's just a video, instead of looking for ways to interact. Simply choosing to engage in class and online meetings by asking questions—and being conscious of the fact that every person involved is just as important as they would be if the meeting was in-person—is better than just sitting through it.

Social interaction is extremely important to who we are as human beings and the COVID-19 pandemic has unquestionably changed it forever, but its impact on our social, mental and physical health doesn't have to be negative. There are many ways to stay connected while still being safe and conscious of the well-being of others. This monumental period in history has challenged every person in many ways but it is not insurmountable. Stay safe, stay conscious and stay connected!





# THE SEARCH FOR C O V I

“We will not be muzzled.”  
“The government can’t silence us.”  
“You can’t take away our rights.”

This rhetoric has become all too common in the past few months. People refusing to wear a mask during a pandemic has, unfortunately, become a common sight in our country. There exists in our population a deep divide between those who wear a mask and those who do not—a divide between those who seemingly do not care for others in our community and those that do. What has happened to the people who refuse to care for our community as much as we do? Where has the sense of community gone for those who prioritize themselves over others during a pandemic that demands we care for others?

According to Smithsonian Magazine, community itself can be traced back to before the beginnings of organized civilization and agriculture, with one of the first pieces of evidence of community—a small year-round hunter-gatherer camp—dating back to nearly 23,000 years ago. A community, as defined by Oxford Bibliographies, is “a group of people who interact with one another... within a bounded geographic territory...[and] often share common values, beliefs or behaviors.”

In many animal populations, including humans, individuals often gather in groups to protect themselves and one another from larger threats. For humans, these groups have ranged from hunter-gatherer groups and sedentary agricultural groups to towns, kingdoms and countries. We continue to define ourselves through our family, friends and others who share our interests.

Community has existed since the beginning of humanity itself. So why does it feel like we’re moving further and further away from one another?

Physically, it is currently understandable that we are required to stay away for the sake of our health. But emotionally? The evening news brings more stories of people refusing to wear masks, repeatedly breaking social distance and ignoring the precautions of health officials in favor of living their life as they please. A growing number of people are valuing their



**Sindhu Manivannan**

She/Her  
Senior  
Neuroscience

freedom to breathe without a mask over the need to keep others safe. Where has our compassion for one another gone, our prehistoric desire to protect our own from the dangers that surround us? What has happened to our need for community?

A big part of our sense of community comes from our culture, specifically our individualism and collectivism. Nearly 70% of the world’s population comes from a collectivist background, according to a study in the International Journal of Human Resource Management, meaning that they value “personal interdependence” and often put the needs of the group above the needs of the individual. The other 30% hail from an individualistic culture, valuing “personal independence” and putting the needs of the individual above the needs of the group. The United States falls within that 30% and, true to its word, displays an enormous appetite for independence and personal expression among its population. The private self, personal autonomy and individual decision-making are just some of the defining characteristics of American culture.

Is this overwhelming sense of independence the reason for our inability as a country to wear a mask? Charlie Warzel, a journalist for The New York Times, claims that a large portion of anti-mask sentiments result from distrust as well. America has a long-running history of distrust in the government, and recent years have not helped to build the bond between officials and citizens. The distrust among officials themselves is blatantly seen when governors refuse to follow federal mask orders and mayors are sued by their governors for refusing to follow their anti-mask mandates. This feeling of misplaced trust runs further when the current administration rebukes public health organizations like the Center for Disease



# COMMUNITY AMONG D - 1 9

Control (CDC) and works to actively defund and de-emphasize its importance during a novel pandemic.

A critical component of community is trust, and when it seems like your leaders don't trust each other or the institutions intentionally created to keep the public safe, it is no wonder that the idea of community is lacking in our society. As Werzel points out, the current administration's financial and social undermining of the CDC pulls the public's trust out of the public health institution, leaving people to wonder who—if anyone—they should trust with their health.

Similarly, politicians have continued to swing from enforcing masks to throwing caution to the wind; In an already tumultuous situation, this does little more than reinforce the deep-seated distrust of the government and push people to believe that it is truly an "all-for-yourself" environment. When confidence in others wavers and faith in one another fails, our inherent connections are lost and along with it goes community.

While it is true that American citizens have the freedom to choose what they wear, it is incredibly difficult to imagine why the freedom to choose to wear a mask matters so much right now. New York Times columnist Amanda Hess believes that the refusal to wear a mask stems from the belief that doing so is a sign of cowardice and submission. The fear of being seen as inferior to others trumps the fear of a pandemic sweeping the nation, and the mask is thus touted as a sign of acquiescence and passivism.

What is seen as a sign of togetherness and mutual protection by some is seen as a sign of weakness and fear by others. It is in this sentiment that we can find a semblance of community once again in our society.

We want other people to have a good image of us, and see us as strong. But being a part of a social group—and having an identity that is impacted by others—requires us to show strength in communal ways: by respecting their lives as much as we do our own. We cannot allow the feeling of independence to be convoluted and warped into the feeling of being better than others in our community, rather than equal to and

fighting together.

So where do we end up as a nation? Does our individualistic identity impede our ability to care for others? Is it our distrust of our own officials, or is it the idea of being a coward in the face of danger that stops us from wearing a mask to protect ourselves and others?

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reason as to why Americans forgo their mask for individual freedom, and the question of where our sense of community has gone may never truly be answered. What can be known, though, is that the American sense of community has not totally disappeared. People have begun socially distant neighborhood gatherings, groups like Letters Against Isolation fight loneliness in the elderly population through the art of letter writing and initiatives like the Farmers to Families Food Box Program have risen up to help local farmers dispense their surplus of crops to those in need.

With more and more people wearing masks to Walmart and stores refusing entry to customers who don't, it is incredibly important to remember that those who forgo the safety of others are not the majority. In the face of the rising anti-vaccination movement—another movement forsaking public safety—a study by researcher Talha Burki found that 70 to 90% of American and U.K. citizens continue to follow the science of vaccinations. These numbers indicate that despite the seemingly rising rates of individualism, the care that we have for one another's well being continues to remain present in a majority of the population.

Despite our setbacks, our community continues to shine through different avenues. When certain individuals refuse to care for others, millions band together to fight against both the pandemic and apathy. As situations change, so do our approaches to living together, and we will, at the end of the day, emerge from this pandemic together: hand in hand and as a community.



# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND A GROWING NEED FOR FINANCIAL SECURITY



**Julian Makhoul**

He/Him  
Senior  
Biology

Should society stand by when the most vulnerable among us are repeatedly exploited by economic downturns? There comes a point where lawmakers must rethink how to better serve the needs of all Americans. When considering the impact that COVID-19 has had on small businesses, employment, renters and the American way of life in general, a remaking of economic policy is necessary—now more than ever. These changes will also be amplified when an increase in automation leads to even more economic and social disruption.

First, COVID-19 has resulted in many small business closures. Data from Yelp shows that more than 80,000 permanently closed from March 1 to July 25, 2020. Of these businesses, 60,000 were local, or had fewer than five locations. Even though these businesses are small individually, the collective impact of these failures is substantial. Firms that have fewer than 500 employees account for 44% of American economic activity, according to a U.S. Small Business Administration Report, and this is almost half of all American workers.

Additionally, mass layoffs have occurred in many industries across the board. According to Pew Research, unemployment rose higher in three months of COVID-19 than it did in two years of the Great Recession. Peak unemployment during the Great Recession was 10.6% compared with 13% in May 2020. The small business closures and this dramatic spike in unemployment from 3.8% in February 2020 can explain some of the unique changes that are happening. Federal lawmakers need to be proactive about these changes, so that the country does not find itself in a dire situation—when earlier action could have been enough.

One of these unique changes is the effect on renters. The COVID-19 downturn is threatening renters' ability to pay on time. According to the Aspen Institute, "If conditions do not change, 29-43 percent of renter households could be at risk of eviction by the end of the year." Following eviction, a person's physical and mental health can be diminished and the probability of obtaining employment declines. Society should not allow this to happen to hard-working American people. According to

CNBC, 39% of younger millennials are also planning on moving back home because of the economic downturn. More millennials are going to be spending time with their families than ever before, and with this precipitates a potentially less work-focused worldview.

Another unique change brought about by this latest economic downturn is that many millennials and members of Generation Z are seeing more value in hobbies and do not associate personal worth with career-based success. If this momentum sustains itself, it is possible that the increased amount of time people spend on hobbies will influence the number of hours that people choose to work in the future. It is also possible that society will begin to accommodate peoples' desires better. This would entail that people have the option to work fewer hours without the fear that their basic needs are threatened. Perhaps this is best encapsulated in author Sam Harris's saying, "In a world of true abundance, you shouldn't have to work to justify your life." Living in a society where people can choose to work less and not have their basic needs endangered is a step toward a better society.

The last unique change brought about by this downturn is how it has uniquely impacted recent high school and college graduates. According to CNBC, 57% of younger millennials are saying that COVID-19 derailed their plan for financial independence. A situation such as this cannot be ignored if the younger generation is to be equipped to handle life in the 21st century.

The effects of this downturn can last several years for the class of 2020. According to The Conversation, U.S. college students during a recession earned 10% less the first year post-graduation than would otherwise be expected—and these effects lasted for the next seven years.

As the 21st century progresses, with significant economic hardships in a close amount of time, a greater amount of the workforce is being exposed to an economy which does not serve its participants well. When posed with a situation like this, it only makes sense that there is a plan in place to prevent widespread discontent, and help lessen the blows of an unprecedented incident like the current pandemic. The American economy cannot afford any more

burdens without a safety net for all its citizens.

Regardless of political ideology, most Americans want to see working-class people prosper as much as possible. If circumstances make it impossible for them to do so, action needs to be taken to ensure their continued well-being. If the country allows a large portion of the workforce to be swept under, this could create a situation of chronic discontent that could take generations to overcome. If lawmakers are wise about delegating government spending and ensuring economic policy works for the majority of people, this is a great step that can be taken to prevent the U.S. from further economic decline.

Because of the impact that COVID-19 has had on small businesses, employment, renters and the American way of life, there is a growing need for a universal basic income (UBI). Fortunately, the stimulus checks sent out in April have reinvigorated former presidential candidate Andrew Yang's token policy. If there ever was a time for UBI to be implemented, it would be right now. When considering the shifting priorities of Americans and the diminished economic prosperity of small business owners and young people, it only makes sense that federal measures are necessary to lessen the blow of not only this economic crisis, but also future economic disruptions that may occur.

This future economic disruption will be brought about by an increase in automation. According to The Regulatory Review, "50% of the entire U.S. workforce is at risk of losing their jobs from rising automation in the coming decades." Once automation increases, society is inevitably going to find itself in a situation where people want to work but are unable to do so, just like during this COVID-19 downturn. Businessman Elon Musk espouses a similar view that UBI will be necessary to confront society's inevitable technological dependency. Speaking about the implementation of UBI, Musk said, "I don't think we're going to have a choice, I think it's going to be necessary. There will be fewer and fewer jobs that a robot cannot do better."

In order to progress as a society, implementing UBI early is the best avenue to prevent widespread disruption in the American way of life and economy. There are a number of ways UBI can become a more realistic possibility to do this, whether it involves \$1,000, \$800 or \$500 a month. What matters is that there is a legitimate step being taken to ensure that Americans are not forced to shoulder a burden that they cannot carry during times of economic crisis. Once UBI is implemented, the hope is that people's basic

needs are met. For instance, current welfare and social program beneficiaries could be given a choice between the current benefits they have or receiving an UBI sum of money per month with no restrictions. Once the UBI is implemented nationally, it is expected that the spending on health care, incarceration and homelessness services will decline without the quality being diminished, according to Andrew Yang. As well, Yang estimates that the U.S. would save \$100 billion to over \$200 billion this way. While complete implementation of UBI would take some time to perfect, that does not mean that it cannot be instituted in slow, small increments.

It is crucial that the U.S. strongly considers how to protect small business owners and younger people from the effects of an economic crisis—to ensure American financial security and prosperity for generations to come.

**WHAT MATTERS IS  
THAT THERE IS A  
LEGITIMATE STEP  
BEING TAKEN TO  
ENSURE THAT  
AMERICANS  
ARE NOT FORCED  
TO SHOULDER A  
BURDEN THAT THEY  
CANNOT CARRY  
DURING TIMES OF  
ECONOMIC CRISIS**



# Here, Queer and Sick

## THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY



**Abby Pribble**

She/Her

First-Year

Political Science and  
Communications

While the United States has progressively become more accepting of the queer community, COVID-19 has exposed many of the disparities that this group continues to face. COVID-19 has affected the queer community disproportionately, and has even further affected its members of color. This is not the first time America has turned an ignorant eye while the queer community has been ravaged by disease: The HIV AIDS epidemic has killed approximately 770,000 largely queer and people of color over 30 years according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The pandemic today has caused the queer community greater economic distress and more difficulty accessing health care.

Before COVID-19, there were already economic disparities that the queer community faced. Many of these disparities stem from discrimination in the workplace and in the housing market. Even though the Supreme Court ruled in July of 2020 that the Civil Rights Act's protection from workplace discrimination extended to queer folks, prejudice has not disappeared. 22% of queer people live in poverty, compared to the non-queer rate of 16%, according to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). As in other types of disparities in the queer community, people of color and transgender people are affected at much higher rates. The HRC has found that bisexual women and transgender folks are affected at the same rate with 29% living in poverty.

Almost half of Black and Latinx trans people are living in poverty, and this largely stems from the queer community's high unemployment rate of one in ten according to HRC. These disparities are not a coincidence; queer people are being discriminated against in the workplace as well as in the housing market.

In addition to economic disparities, queer youth have also always had higher suicide rates than their non-queer counterparts. These disparities have sadly been further amplified by the pandemic. Many youths rely on safe spaces like school or therapy to better their mental health. When these places shut down and COVID-19 began to spread, these young people lost their safe spaces. For queer youth that have unaccepting families, the pandemic has been even harder.

They have been trapped in a space that does not accept them for who they are.

COVID-19 has also shown how harmful the lack of access to health care is in the queer community. These Americans have always been more likely than the general population to lack access to medical care and basic necessities, in part because of the previously discussed economic disparities that the community faces. According to HRC, one in five queer Americans have not seen a doctor because of their lack of ability to afford it, as well as their fears of discrimination.

In addition to this lack of access to doctors, queer Americans also tend to have less access to health insurance coverage overall. The HRC counts 17% lack health insurance coverage. Lack of health insurance is another way in which we see the importance of understanding intersectionality within the queer community because, according to HRC, the rates of uninsured members are higher for queer people of color and transgender adults, and are highest for transgender people of color—at 32% lacking health insurance coverage. This lack of access to health care among the queer community has always been prevalent; however COVID-19 has further exposed this disparity to those who are not affected by it.

There is another sect of the queer community that is facing enhanced challenges right now: youth. One perspective that we often don't think about is the trauma and mental toll that can come when a child's identity is disrespected by their family or intolerance is reinstated. When children and teens, such as TikTok star @yazdemand, grow up knowing that they are not accepted for their sexual orientation or gender identity, they can feel further trapped by isolating themselves in an unsupportive space. While there is no doubt that schools and many in-person events needed to be shut down during the pandemic, it is important that we still address the problem that is deeply rooted in our society—discrimination and heteronormativity—by creating more safe spaces for queer youth during this time. For many, TikTok is that safe space that we need to respect.

COVID-19 has harmed the queer community disproportionately, especially transgender folks, and has even further heavily affected its members of color. These disparities have been here and will continue to be here unless we do something. They did not start when COVID-19 started, they have been affecting queer people globally for decades. Under conditions like this, the right to life is increasingly unattainable in the queer community. Like Marsha P. Johnson, a Black transwoman who led the Stonewall Riots said, “darling, we want our gay rights now!”

# One Nation, under Which God?

Every day, from kindergarten to sophomore year of high school (like many brewing Americans), I recited a creed that dedicated my commitment to patriotism. The Pledge of Allegiance: a ritual in which we weave the American fabric into the identities of our children. Threads made of bravery, courage and independence; stitches made of bigotry, hierarchies and oppression. The original Pledge of Allegiance was written by socialist minister Francis Bellamy in August of 1892. It read:

"I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

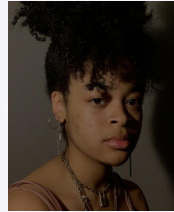
Written in honor of the 400-year anniversary of the "discovery" of America, the Pledge of Allegiance has become an integral part of any ceremonial, meaningful American tradition. But what does God have to do with this? Why, in 1954, were the words "under God" added to the creed? Mantras such as this and "In God we Trust" instill the values of America's founding religion: "devout, orthodox Christianity," according to The Heritage Foundation. This fails to leave room for the promises of religious freedom but catalyzes stigmas and stereotypes against non-Christian forms of spirituality. However, when looking at the grand scheme of things, spirituality is just us all looking for answers.

In his textbook, "Spirituality: Forms, Foundations and Methods", professor of theology Kees Waaijman defines spirituality as a process of transformation which "aims to recover the original shape of man." That is the working definition I will use to preface the rest of this piece.

There are a few ways people choose to undergo this reformation; the most popular one being religion. There are supplemental traditions, beliefs, values and rituals associated with each, and the difference between them seems to be the point of controversy. Sacred texts, buildings, fashions and mannerisms characterize the different "aims to recover the original shape of man."

With America's founders being of traditional Protestant religion, it makes sense that we attribute everything to big 'G' God. We blame God for everything; we thank God for everything. In times of intense emotional response, we exclaim "oh my God." According to Judaism, Christianity, Sufism of Islam and related sects, humans are created in the likeness of God. This can be interpreted as God having human-like characteristics or as humans having God-like characteristics. Either way, it's safe to conclude that God is as diverse as we humans are. And with that being said, who's to say exactly who or what God is?

There are other aims to explain and participate in the original form of man and its matter. I recently launched a survey with aims to better gauge how my generation



**Inspyr Simon**

She/Her

Sophomore

English

practices religion and spirituality. Results illustrated that the older the individual, the more religious they are. The younger the individual, the more spiritual they are. However, when asked what the difference was, all answers were very subjective, vague and fluid. While some agreed that spirituality and religion are identical, others declared that they were strictly one or the other. When asked how they choose to express or practice their spirituality or religion, I received answers ranging from traditional church-going and prayer to meditation and witchcraft.

Between Islamophobic travel bans and the negative portrayal of witches and sorcerers in the media, America fosters an atmosphere that fears alternative spiritual pursuits. But if spirituality is the pursuit of the unknown, then what makes some explanations scarier than others? Who's to say the God in "under God" and "in God we trust" isn't all encompassing? Why can it not be contextually applied to honor the human pursuit of explaining physical matters?

In Alcoholics Anonymous, participants depend on the belief in a higher power. This doesn't mean big 'G' God; this is anything that isn't drugs, alcohol or another human. When COVID-19 struck, we immediately turned to the higher powers and principles of science and elected officials to make us feel safe, manageable, human. We rely on systems like karma and reciprocity to navigate through mortal relations and hold us accountable in our actions.

Viable candidates for a higher power include love, peace, big 'G' God, the universe, energy, science, etcetera. In these programs, it doesn't matter who or what your higher power is, as long as it's a power higher than yourself. Why? Because at the end of the day, it serves the same purpose: to give us supplemental strength.

To refer back to our working definition, we all just want to go home; we are all participating in whatever activities and entertaining whatever beliefs we believe to "recover the original form of man." According to Psychology Today, many people who suffer from mood disorders and mental illnesses cite an unidentifiable void as a trigger for their feelings. This feeling can be logically attributed to the human longing to find their original form. When looking at spirituality in a broader light, it makes alternative forms look less intimidating to us. Because we are taught to fear what we do not know, knowing eases the terror.



# The National Pastime

It's Thursday night and I am sitting in front of the television, listening to analysts describe the scene in front of me. I am wearing my team colors and watching numbers scroll across the bottom of the screen, hoping that the statistics will give me any type of indication whether my team will win this year. After the host finishes their monologue, the leader of the other team shows up on the screen. I swear and yell at the TV like my parents do, even though they have different allegiances than myself. When the evening is over, and I have consumed my fill of competition, I go to bed, unsatisfied with the stalemate the two participating teams found themselves in. No, despite the evidence to the contrary, I was not watching the Kansas City Chiefs take on the Houston Texans on Thursday Night Football. I was watching the United States Election Year coverage on the nightly news.

When you watch the news, it's almost as if you are watching a broadcast of the Super Bowl. There are pre-game and post-game analysts, and game time announcers who narrate breaking news. Each team has their starting lineup of mic'd-up candidates who, every day, give us both uplifting and heartbreaking plays to laugh, cry and stress over. As in any type of competition, there can be no cross-team cooperation. It must be brutally contentious, with trash-talk and tackles. We don't want a blowout, we want a bloody, hard-fought, angry race to the finish line. The only way coverage of the election could be any more breathlessly exciting is if ESPN hosted and produced the debates.

The problem with consuming our politics like we consume our sports entertainment, is that this type of coverage makes us desensitized to the reality of politics and government in our lives. When the television broadcast of the Chiefs' game is over, you go to bed. The result has no real impact on the outcome of your life. Politics however, does. Yet, we are tempted by our governmental leaders and political candidates off the hook at the end of debate night as if they hung up their jersey and just walked out of the locker room, no longer responsible for anything other than giving us a good show.

This distraction, this perfect ruse, is detrimental to the political health of our nation in a number of ways. First, it allows us to ignore the actual people who work to make our government run, and to provide us basic services. Second, it shifts the focus to the national stage, the "big



**Savannah Seyer**

She/Her

Senior

Political Science

games," instead of drawing attention to the issues affecting millions of Americans at the local and state level, where real progress (and disenfranchisement) is happening. Third, it makes us feel as though our political system is no more than a game—one where we are spectators, not participants, where we are small in the face of the rules and structures of the game, and where our opinions and interests do not matter to the outcome. After all, when is the last time the referee reversed a call of pass interference because you yelled at the TV loud enough, or voted to have it changed?

The nature of American politics to be framed as entertainment has given us a warped idea of how the government works. American government is complex, and perhaps, more accessible than we think. The government is not simply broken down into two teams who are actively fighting to win the trophy in November. It is made up of bureaucrats, volunteers, professionals and idealists who simply want to provide the goods and services that the American people need and deserve. The government, when working properly, provides us clean water, delivers our mail, funds public education and issues drivers' licenses and passports. It regulates trade and provides defense. However, those things are reliant on those unrecognized, hardworking public servants who want to work for the American people, not for themselves. That's not exciting. EA Sports would never put the offensive line coach on the cover of Madden 2021, so why should CNN care about the low-

level bureaucrat who is trying to process an immigration application?

This lack of attention means that these people are unsupported. They do not receive the recognition, the funds, or the personnel needed to actually provide these services, because all of the attention is directed towards fueling the egos and pet projects of unhinged talking head party leaders and pundits. Look at what has happened to



to the United States Postal Service, an essential government agency run by hard working citizens who just want to make sure we get our Amazon orders and medicines and deliver our mail-in ballots. When we are so focused on who the CEO of Goya Beans supports, we ignore the things that actually matter, leading to funding freezes and intentional slowdowns of the government services we need, by those who know that we are not paying attention to the things that actually matter: the policy, the laws, the real life consequence of politics.

In addition, this national focus on positions like President and Speaker of the House has allowed Americans to completely ignore the governmental processes that are affecting their communities at the ground level. When your school board approves a regulation you don't like, your first reaction shouldn't be, "Thanks Obama," it should be, "Maybe I should pay more attention in my local school board, whose decisions affect me personally and are made right here, in my own backyard, by people I know." No one can deny that who the President is matters unequivocally in shaping the direction of the nation. However, our lives are shaped every day by those lower-level government employees and elected officials who make decisions about what laws can be enforced in our state, and what protections we have in our public interactions and how much we pay in taxes.

We have allowed ourselves to become removed from politics the way that mirrors how we interact with our sports teams. We have strong emotional ties to our team. We yell at the other team's fans, cry and scream when we lose and cheer when we win. At no point however, do we suit up, run off the sidelines, shove the head coach out of the way and inform him that we will now be running this game, because we don't like the way he is calling the shots. We need to be a little more active. Americans need to throw on their jerseys and start actively paying attention. We need to learn the rulebook, and we need to recognize that our opinions actually matter and that our actions can have an impact.

Fixing spectator politics can only happen through an overhaul of the way we think about politics in our society. It will require education, media literacy training and accountability measures for the media, politicians and ourselves.

First, we need to start actually teaching civics and government in schools. All schools. It needs to be an integral part of the curriculum. One class period in freshman year of high school is not enough to

impress upon American students how the government is supposed to work, how it actually works and how they can be a part of it. Education is the foundation with which we can change this broken system.

Second, we need to pull back the curtain on politics. We need real people to run for office, those who are willing to show us the reality of government. We also need real people to start paying attention to the government—especially at the state and local level. Civic responsibility and involvement give citizens a stake in the decision-making process and proves to those in charge that we are here, paying attention, and actively participating in deciding what direction our lives will take. Americans have to swap ESPN for CSPAN and start looking past the great distraction political elites have created. We can no longer crave brutal political competition, and must instead start rewarding political morality, effectiveness, and accountability. We have to leave the entertainment to the professional athletes on Sunday afternoons, and start telling our politicians to keep their score-keeping sports out of our politics.

Third, we need to start recognizing those who spend their lives working to provide us the basic necessities we need to live, and those who are working to hold the government accountable to us. Postal workers, bureaucrats, staffers, city maintenance workers, volunteers and activists, and all those who are completely unrecognized in the primetime broadcast of political media. These are the people who make up the United States Government, and their touchdowns, false starts, penalties and Hail Marys deserve just as much air time, if not more, than any presidential candidate.





# POV: COVID-19 INTENSIFIES THE



**Riya Shah**

She/Her

First-Year

Public Health

The genius Elon Musk's take on COVID-19 in mid-March 2020: "Based on current trends, probably close to zero new cases in the US too by the end of April."

Musk is correct; as of October 6, there have only been 2,200 pandemic-related deaths in Missouri, according to The New York Times, and the death rate is only around 1%. St. Louis's early call-to-action allows people of the city to relax on the rules. Nothing to worry about, right? As long as everyone wears a mask to cover their mouths, the noses don't need a cover, right?

Even though the COVID-19 cases went up by 18% in St. Louis, according to the City of St. Louis Department of Health, and the death rate went up by 286%, there is no reason to be troubled to follow the new regulations. Because of the social distancing guidelines, encouraging masks and following hygiene practices for only a couple of months, it is okay for that one party or to walk around without your mask or hang out with a bunch of people outside. I mean it's not like COVID-19 can spread in the air outside—right? And looking at Missouri's statistics, Black people are disproportionately affected by COVID-19, with a case rate of almost 75%, according to the Boston Re-

view, but Black lives matter... right? It seems like even sarcasm can't shield the dangers of COVID-19 or racial inequality in the city of St. Louis.

Racial disparities across the nation have been acknowledged but not disputed. It has been a widely known social issue that has gradually been gaining more attention—however, it has been slow to reach the health care system. According to the Institute of Medicine, racial disparities in health care include "racial or ethnic differences in the quality of health care that are not due to access-related factors or clinical needs, preferences and appropriateness of intervention."

The mortality rate for prominent diseases such as heart disease, breast cancer and even stroke is higher for minorities than for white people. These issues are not because of genetics, but because of a lack of good quality health care: a preventable but inconvenient health care truth. Many people are privileged enough to pop up at their doctor's office at the slightest inconvenience, while there are others who are extremely ill but refuse to visit a doctor because of costs. This not only puts their life in danger, but those around them as well. COVID-19 happens to be a factor that increased the racial gap in access and quality healthcare.

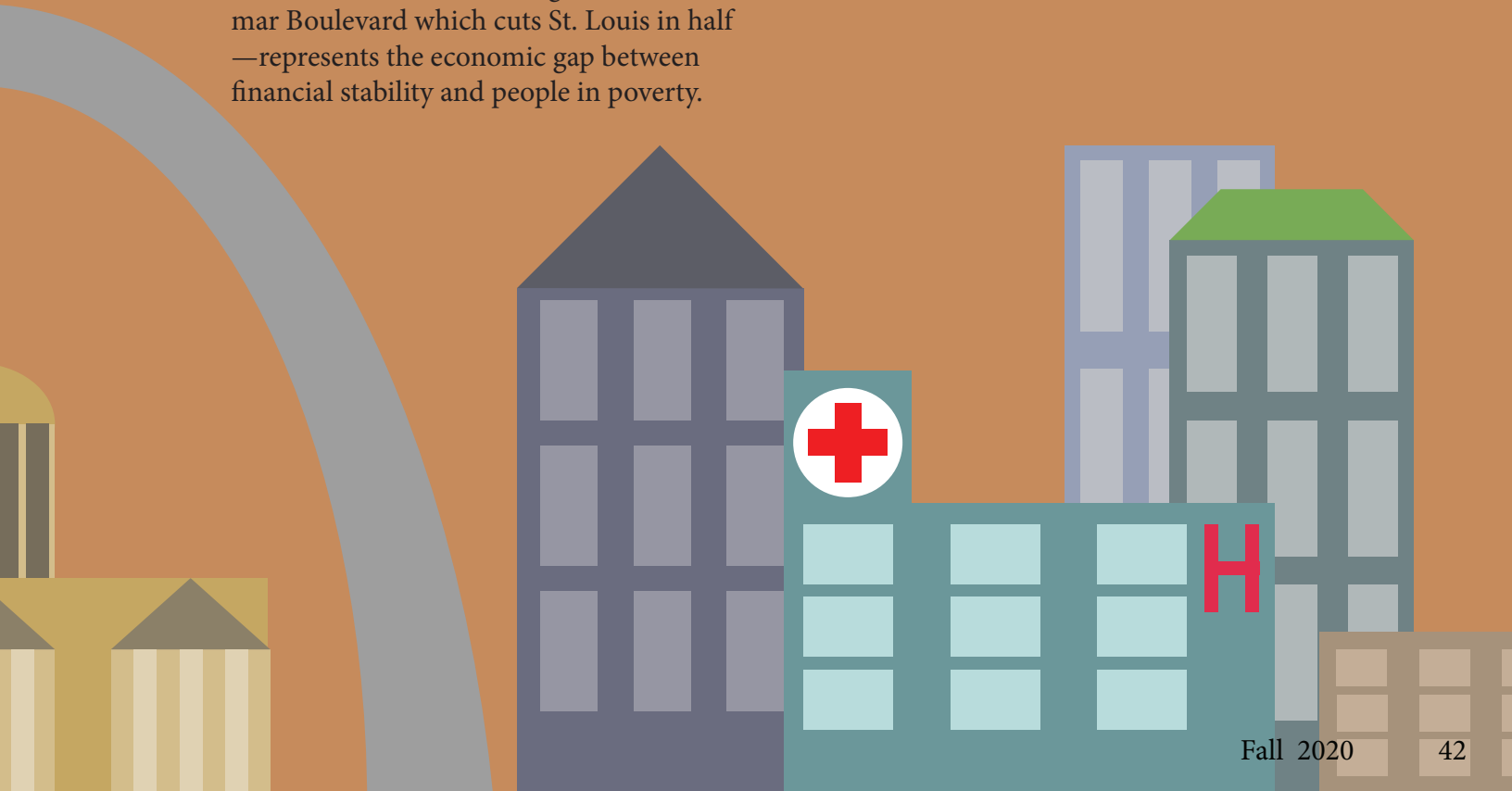
# DELMAR DIVIDE FOR HEALTHCARE

When focusing on the divide between races and the rise of COVID-19 cases in Saint Louis, the Black community is disproportionately affected. It is common knowledge that the virus greatly harms people with underlying conditions. Which population has the highest risk for contracting asthma, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and, by extension, COVID-19 in St. Louis, according to a study done by the U.S. National Library of Medicine? Black people. Which population has the highest unemployment rate in St. Louis, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis? Black people. Which population in St. Louis has been systematically forced to live in areas with poor air and water quality, industrial toxins and failure in sanitary infrastructure according to The Boston Review? Black people. Which population has a rate of COVID-19 cases near 400 for every 100,000 residents in Missouri? Black people. What population faces routine implicit bias from physicians? Black people. No matter how many Instagram stories you post to promote Black Lives Matter (BLM) or how many marches you go to or how many people you dox on the internet for their biased views, health care professionals maintain implicit bias, drastically affecting the health of the Black population in Saint Louis, especially during COVID-19.

St. Louis is one of the most segregated cities in the country, according to St. Louis Post-Dispatch. The “Delmar Divide”—a name given to Delmar Boulevard which cuts St. Louis in half—represents the economic gap between financial stability and people in poverty.

Because of the racist systems in place for centuries, many people of color live in the North where there is less access to quality health care. In areas with these zip codes—where around 16% of the population is Black—the Missouri Hospital Association found that around 35% of all confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been Black people. This is disproportionate, and there should be initiatives taken, whether small or big, to tackle these issues. There need to be policies created to enhance education, awareness and encouragement to test for COVID-19, and more tracking done to see the treatment and recovery outcomes of the Black population.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also observed that even before the COVID-19, issues of the mortality gap and risks of developing a disease were higher in Black people. There should be more effort put into place to help people across the Delmar Divide. It takes not just one of us to acknowledge the disparities in health care—sorry, Elon Musk—but a whole community before any measures can effectively help our fellow Black Americans and St. Louisians.





# BIAS in DISCIPLINE:

## Encouraging School Counselors to Incorporate Intersectional Thinking

The word “intersectionality” has made its way into prominent political conversations in recent years, but its definition is unclear to much of the public and is often simply seen as a synonym for diversity or inclusion. Prominent scholar of critical race theory Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989 in response to anti-discrimination laws that marginalized the unique experiences of Black women by failing to consider how the overlap of race and gender subjected them to a completely different set of experiences and prejudices.

But this bias isn't limited to the workplace—it starts young for many Black women. A 2015 study led by Crenshaw and her colleagues found that 12% of Black girls were given exclusionary suspensions in comparison to the 2% of white girls who were given the same punishment. The study further illuminated on microaggressions and implicit biases against Black girls, as teachers often exercised disciplinary measures against them to encourage them to mold into more “acceptable” models of femininity—looks and demeanor reflect white, middle-class ideals of women.

Education is supposed to be a great equalizing force but in schools, students who belong to multiple minority groups face unique prejudices that must be taken into account when figuring out how to succeed and flourish in an academic setting. For example, a 2016 study published in Teachers College Press found that in special education classes, factors such as race, ethnicity or poverty could determine whether a student was placed in a more restrictive learning environment or how a student received punitive disciplinary actions. In this example, we look at how discrimination based on race, ethnicity and poverty can overlap with having a disability and create inhibitions in learning. These are populations that face prejudiced treatment against their intersecting identities.

While the U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse, school psychologists are still predominantly white females. In 2016, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) reported that 83% of school psychologists surveyed were female, 87% were white and 86% spoke English only.



**Satya Sanapati**

She/Her

Junior

Neuroscience

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 50% of public school students belong to racial or ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, approximately 9.4% of students are identified as English language learners. There is a clear misalignment between students and their psychologists in terms of their backgrounds and experiences. While belonging to different identities is not at all bad, it is important that school counselors and psychologists have a cross-cultural education to better understand and mediate these social injustices.

School counselors must be able to recognize social injustice in schools and fix the problem, which is difficult to do when they are not experiencing the pain from the injustice personally. Further, it is important that counselors educate their students to help do the same because the counselor may not always be aware of some injustices, especially those that do not occur in their sight or at the school. A counselor may also play a role in a student's journey in developing their identities or even their struggle to figure out where they fit in with all their identities. For example, a student may have been raised in a religiously strict household, so he identifies as a member of that religion. As the student gets older, however, he may also identify as gay. The student might be led to believe that the two identities conflict, causing great pain and distress for him. A counselor that is cross-culturally literate can help him through this.

As mentioned before, a notable instance of intersectionality in schools is the disproportionate punishment administered toward Black girls. A 2015 study performed by Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda, titled “Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected,” found that compared to girls of other races, Black girls face a higher risk of suspension and expulsion for subjective behavioral violations. These behavioral violations were subjectively doled out to Black girls, because they are stereotypically and incorrectly perceived as loud, unruly or unmanageable,

and behave in opposition to norms established by white institutions.

A 2011 study published in The Urban Review observed intersectional dynamics of race and gender in urban school districts. The study had similar findings to Crenshaw et al.'s report and stated that unlike Hispanic and white girls, Black girls were most often punished for behaviors perceived to be in opposition to institutional standards of femininity. These types of discriminatory discipline practices target Black girls for being themselves, causing psychological harm and leading them to feel unsafe in their own schools.

The prejudices Black girls face begin as early as preschool and follow them throughout the academic career. According to a 2016 report by the U.S. Department of Education, while Black girls represent only 20% of female preschool enrollment, they represent 54% of female preschool children who receive one or more out-of-school suspensions. The report shows this trend continuing as Black girls are still overrepresented in exclusionary disciplinary punishments in comparison to their Hispanic and white counterparts in K-12 years.

It is important to recognize that these are unfair punishments, because this systemic discrimination results in less opportunity for success. Crenshaw's work demonstrates how Black girls who are suspended or expelled lose time in school where they could be learning and growing, and instead are subjected to underachievement, school dropout and increased marginalization within the school setting.

These punishments go beyond the hours spent in detention. The National Assessment of Educational Progress details what is known as the "achievement gap." Achievement gaps occur when there is a statistically significant difference in outcomes between two groups of students. Achievement gaps are marked by their consistency and persistence. While achievement gaps are most often identified in relation to standardized test scores, they are clearly reported in educational attainment through graduation rates, college-

enrollment rates, college-completion rates, dropout rates and absenteeism rates.

The achievement gap is a prominent feature of education as it can be analyzed across any two groups of students, making it easy to include intersectional identities. A study conducted at the Department of Education at the University of Oxford found that achievement gaps resulting from differences in ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic statuses do not combine in an additive manner, but are rather composed of significant interactions.

With knowledge on how intersectional roles have a determinant part in a student's education, school psychologists can better understand Black girls and how to help them along their academic careers. This same consideration of intersectionality can be applied across any type of social group to address issues such as racial and cultural inequality, domestic violence and queer challenges, and their impacts on student success. Adopting an intersectional lens can combat the marginalization of these students by initiating a school psychologist's recognition of systemic and institutional power imbalances that place students with minoritized, intersectional roles in gaps.





# left behind & left to die



**Ava Gagner**

She/Her

Junior

Sociology

Professional tennis player Serena Williams, like many women in the United States, faced some serious complications during and after child birth. The athlete, who has won 23 Grand Slam titles, is not immune to health complications. Williams is prone to blood clots from a condition that threatened her life back in 2011. During the birth of her daughter, Williams told hospital staff that she believed she was having a pulmonary embolism, which is a sudden blockage of an artery in the lung by a blood clot. However, the hospital staff did not take her concern seriously.

Two days after having an emergency cesarean section, Williams believed she was having another pulmonary embolism due to having trouble breathing. Once again, hospital staff ignored her concern and her direct request for a CT scan and blood thinner. Finding nothing wrong in an ultrasound scan of Williams's legs, hospital staff eventually gave into Williams's request for a CT scan, which revealed several blood clots in her lungs. Her complications continued long after the blood clots were discovered. Coughing caused from the pulmonary embolism resulted in Williams's C-section wound reopening, leading to another surgery to fix the problem.

During this surgery, doctors found a hematoma, a collection of blood outside of the blood vessels, in her abdomen. This meant Williams needed yet another surgery to help prevent more blood clots from traveling to her lungs. These complications during and after childbirth left the professional athlete bedridden for six weeks.

Williams is not alone in experiencing complications during and after pregnancy. In the United States, these complications disproportionately affect Black people who give birth. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the risk of pregnancy-related death is three to four times as high for Black women as it is for white women. And, unfortunately, little has been done to successfully address this disparity.

Attempts have been made by The Commonwealth Fund and The National Partnership for Women and Families, along with other organizations, to understand why this disparity between maternal mortality and race exists. There are many health systems and social factors that affect Black women's access to care and quality of care. The National Partnership for Women

and Families reports that Black women are "more likely to experience barriers to obtaining quality care and often face racial discrimination throughout their lives." These barriers include, but are not limited to, income inequality and underinsurance or lack of insurance.

Racism in the medical system and in Black parents' everyday lives can impact health. In a study titled "The Impact of Racism on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of African American Women," researchers found that "social determinants of health, including poverty, unemployment and limited education, contribute to health disparities. However, racism is a probable underlying determinant of these social conditions." From these findings, it is clear that structural issues in society need to be addressed in order to improve health outcomes for Black mothers in the United States.

Accessing timely and high quality care can be challenging, especially in medically underserved areas. Many rural areas lack the physical proximity to a doctor and are also less likely to have specialized care, including reproductive health care, specialists and mental health services. Without reproductive services, women lack access to contraception, STD and STI screenings, reproductive cancer screenings and abortion services.

Even in urban areas, underserved hospitals might not provide services like maternity wards and OB-GYNs. Washington D.C.'s Providence Hospital and United Medical Center serves lower-income women, but recently closed two of its maternity wards, leaving women in the area with fewer opportunities to seek care.

In addition, Black women experience stressors related to race and discrimination during pregnancy which can lead to worse health outcomes for them and their babies. The Center for American Progress says that it is "the cumulative experience of racism and sexism, especially during sensitive



# black maternal mortality

developmental periods, triggers a chain of biological processes, known as weathering, that undermine African American women's physical and mental health."

This added stress during pregnancy can have serious consequences. Researchers at Emory University found that underlying biological changes occur in minority and low-income pregnant women in response to chronic stress. This can lead to a number of complications due to the stress hormone cortisol being released into their bodies, and according to the researchers, "Inflammation and elevated free cortisol during pregnancy are associated with significant adverse maternal and infant outcomes, including preterm birth, hypertension, diabetes, preeclampsia and miscarriage."

The racial bias in pain perception on the part of white medical staff results in less pain treatment for Black individuals, and Black women experience this during pregnancy. ProPublica found that Black mothers and expecting mothers report that doctors did not take their pain seriously. Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of the Black Lives Matter movement, told ProPublica about her delivery experience. Cullors said that during an emergency C-section the doctor "never explained what he was doing to me," and said that "my mother basically had to scream at the doctors to give me the proper pain meds." Cullors points out that when white people advocate for themselves or family members, they tend to be taken more seriously by medical staff, but she says, "When [B]lack people are advocating for our family members, we're complaining, we're being uppity, we don't know what we're talking about, we're exaggerating." Just like in Serena Williams's pulmonary embolism, Black mothers consistently are not believed by their doctors—but it's not just celebrities who face this.

Shalon Irving's story is a tragic example of postpartum death and how, even when socioeconomic status is not a barrier to care, Black women are still more likely to die than their white counterparts. Irving was an elite ranking epidemiologist for the

CDC, whose work focused on structural inequality and health outcomes. Irving was well off and well educated, with a B.A. in sociology, two master's degrees, dual-subject Ph.D. and a fantastic insurance policy. She's an unlikely candidate for something to go wrong during her pregnancy, but sadly, three weeks after giving birth, Irving died from complications due to high blood pressure.

Irving's story, reported by NPR, shows that the disparities in maternal mortality rates are not just due to socioeconomic factors, but instead there is a bigger problem at play. Dr. Ana Langer, director of the Women and Health Initiative at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health says, "Basically, [B]lack women are undervalued. They are not monitored as carefully as white women are. When they do present with

symptoms, they are often dismissed." This lack

of monitoring is what can especially cause deaths after pregnancy. Providing patient-centered and reproductive care needs to be a priority. Reproductive health facilities and care should be prioritized in the medical system, especially in areas that are underserved. Not only is expanding the care for Black women important, the care that Black women receive needs to be higher quality. The Center for American Progress states that it is important to "train providers to address racism and build a more diverse health care workforce." Over time, this will hopefully eliminate racial biases in medicine that lead to worse health outcomes for minorities.

There also needs to be an improvement in data oversight and management in order to provide a better understanding of the underlying causes of maternal mortality. The National Partnership for Women & Families explains that "a structured death review process can provide powerful data and information to facilitate change that improves the health of women before, during and after pregnancy." There must be equity in this review process and it should involve medical professionals, community stakeholders, health advocates, patients and family members. It is also important to expand paid family and medical leave. According to the National Partnership for Women & Families, "Only 30 percent of Black mothers are both eligible for and able to afford to take unpaid leave," under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. Without paid leave, it is hard for pregnant women and new mothers to prioritize their health.

It is clear that Black women are faced with many obstacles to access unbiased, high quality medical care through all stages of pregnancy, which has led to their disproportionate maternal deaths and morbidity in the United States. Valuable lives have been lost because our health care system leaves Black parents behind. They do not get the access to care, they are not believed in a medical setting and they are not given support after delivery. More awareness is needed in order to deal with some of the issues responsible for this unacceptable mortality rate. There are many advocates and groups working toward promoting awareness, along with individuals, like Serena Williams, sharing their stories.

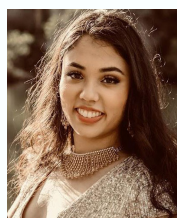


# THE INDIVISIBILITY - OF THE - HUMAN SPIRIT

As the novel COVID-19 virus continues to aggressively ravage the depths of our universe, its impending complications continue to pervasively divide the rich from the poor, the elevated from the marginalized. Moreover, as we have seen the disastrous effects of the virus in fusion with increased micro- and macroaggressions against people of color around the world, we are at the heart of two global pandemics: COVID-19 and cultural insensitivity. Thus, in the American health care system, it is cardinal that our institution reassesses the founding principles it is based on and its subsequent social implications.

As such, the power of the clinical encounter is a potent treasure that breathes the fumes of fidelity, autonomy and ability into the body of belief. Such encounters do not merely produce superficial effects at the biological level but rather alter the psyche of mankind and trailblaze a universal standard of medicine as the purest aggregate of art and science. It is not merely a goods-and-service-exchange dictated by miscellaneous, external factors, rather a fluid and dynamic, ever-evolving dialogue between the healer and the seeker, the valid and the invalid, as dictated by its internal, self-cultivating principles.

When a clinician is evaluating a patient for a specific disease or therapy, they are not simply viewing the physicality of the human body as separate from its moral or cultural governance. The human being is not merely seen as a fashion of cells, tissues, organs and systems to be medically treated, rather as a conglomerate of its life experiences, personal perception of good and its consequent mental makeup that influences its actions and decision-making processes. When one separates or disregards cultural identity from the body, that is to remove all entities that make a being, to reduce them to nothing more than an inanimate object. When transactions in society continue to discriminate and judge on



**Aarti Sahai**

She/Her  
First-Year  
Biology

the basis of cultural shock, insensitivity foments.

Furthermore, in the context of the American health care system, clinical pundits often measure the success of a medical institution through its emphasis on the “cutting-edge” as a marker for effective medicine. Thus, many medical foundations foster intense, linear environments saturated with an overbearing significance on the empirical and technical. The result is pathogen-competent, culturally-illiterate providers that hyperfocus on the science behind the disease and deem other social factors as external to the nature of their job.

I believe this is exceedingly paradoxical with the true nature of healing, being that medicine is a treasure dependent on the emotional and social makeup of the human being. It is vital that we begin to assert the need for cultural sensitivity and competency training, as access to health should be a unifying resource, not a divisive inequality.

In order for this process to occur, we must first recognize the importance of cultural sensitivity as it relates to the medical profession. Drs. Jessica Gregg and Somnath Saha of Oregon Health Sciences & University, in “Losing Culture on the Way to Competence: The Use and Misuse of Culture in Medical

Education”, present a distinct event where a young child of Hmong descent unfortunately lapses into a coma. The authors underscore the notion that the child’s unfortunate suffering was partly due to the invisible yet divisive barriers of cultural plurality that ultimately hindered the Hmong-American family from receiving the maximum benefits of the American healthcare system.

Thus, the authors propel the notion that a physician’s ability to treat corrosive diseases would improve if they were deft in the ability to extrapolate the ideology behind their patient’s perception of the illness and into the context of the greater science-based principles that medicine is founded upon. This is so crucial; in order for a patient to be properly evaluated and understood on a biological level, the patient must also be evaluated on a social, emotional and cultural level.

That is, clinicians must acknowledge the dynamic arena of the external factors that are linked to the internal essence of the human being that truly make that person themselves. As Gregg and Saha point out, one must also stray from the convenient yet deceptive trap of overgeneralizing in regard to understanding a person’s background and values. That is, one must not only acknowledge the culturistic differences that prevail in order to best inform their treatment protocol and maximize the chances of better patient outcomes, but also realize that culture is not a discrete, all-encompassing linear model. Rather, culture is elliptical and highly varied. In other words, it is not merely enough to immerse oneself in the aspects of a different culture.

In the process of recognizing varied cultural backgrounds, one must not undermine a person’s unique identity by placing them into stagnant, socially-constructed categories. There is no one-size-fits-all approach in medicine, each person belonging to a specific cultural community won’t necessarily embody each element of what that culture represents. All in all, if clinicians are to recognize the diversified boundaries that differentiate us as human beings and allow these boundaries to inspire the way they effectively and critically treat us—without sabotaging the essence of what makes each individual unique—an invigorated, patient-centered, holistic approach will arise out of the ashes of medicine’s current one-dimensional analysis of disease and illness.

But, how do we translate these idyllic notions into the context of American culture and the clinic? Drs. E.J. Emanuel and L.L. Emanuel of the University of Pennsylvania and Northwestern

University coined a deliberative model which encourages fruitful discussion and dialogue that aims to establish the physician’s credibility with the patient, as well as better inform the physician how to best

meet the needs of the patient’s cultural landscapes. This can be especially harmonious in a pluralistic society if implemented.

This patient-centered and unique approach to medicine leads to an empowered and educated patient that is made to understand the aspects of their disease, both medically and personally as it relates to their core principles. Additionally, it acknowledges the humanistic aspect of patient care, while still maintaining the merits of the physician’s medically-based expertise.

Furthermore, it indirectly alludes to the notion that a person’s values are inherently binded to their beings; there is simply no moral on-and-off switch that one can implement, even in the field of medicine. Thus, through synergistically executing the deliberative model in conjunction with increased social awareness, a physician and patient can ultimately come to an understanding rooted in sound medical competence and morality as medicine is both the science and art of healing.

This effective change has the extraordinary capabilities to metamorphosize into a social arena of cultural consciousness, recognition and alertness. Thus, the clinical encounter is a unique treasure in the landscape of our universe that should be rooted in the inherent good for all. It is one human being confiding in another human being: transporting physical ailments into a battleground dictated by scientific advancement and personal ideology. Yet, even amongst our increasingly trying times, let us morph the American healthcare system as a unifying factor that spews love, acceptance and resources equally.

Let us demand that our fellow marginalized humans be elevated in this fight. Let us continue to shift the paradigm from empirical based medicine to narrative based medicine with an emphasis on cultural sensitivity. Let us fight the fight and bind the values of what makes each person whole in our souls. Let us persevere, let us reshape, let us protect.





# The “Stay at Home” Order: Homelessness During COVID-era



**Dhvanii Raval**

She/Her

Junior

Neuroscience

On March 23, 2020, the city of St. Louis announced a “Stay At Home” order, a city-wide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19. At the time, schools, stores and any other imaginable public location were beginning to shut down or have limited hours indefinitely.

While many students were coping with the news that spring break had turned into an extended isolation at home with Saint Louis University (SLU) transitioning to remote learning, most were able to safely retreat to their homes. However, the estimated 6,000 people experiencing homelessness in St. Louis, had few choices left.

Prior to the pandemic, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness reported that over 500,000 people nationally were estimated to be unhomed, with approximately 6,000 in the Gateway City alone. Though official COVID-19 homelessness statistics have not been released, the economic aggravation due to the pandemic has skyrocketed unemployment, increased eviction rates, caused rent strikes and pushed emergency shelters to capacity. This is especially prevalent in St. Louis.

According to The Saint Louis American newspaper, there are normally 518 beds available to the unhomed population but, due to social distancing guidelines, there were only 40 available beds at the peak of the pandemic. The mayor and grassroots operations like City of Hope were working on securing more housing locations but, while other cities were able to house their unhomed members within 10 days, there was a massive and highly detrimental delay in providing the same urgency to the St. Louis unhomed population. In response to this, there was an encampment in front of City Hall that illustrated the lack of care that left thousands of people in a dangerous limbo.

Furthermore, the inefficacy of the St. Louis government has brutal consequences on the unhomed population. Yale Medicine reports that unhomed people fall into the COVID-19 severe risk category, with many of them having other comorbidities that could make them more susceptible to the virus. Not only are these people biologically more vulnerable to COVID-19, but they don't

have the option to quarantine or social distance and many may not have access to personal protective equipment (PPE) or testing—unlike other vulnerable populations.

Saint Louis Area Regional Commission on Homelessness (SLARCH) estimated that 40% of the unhomed population would be infected with the virus, as opposed to 3% of the St. Louis homed population. In addition, over 4,000 people in the unhomed population is Black, according to the St. Louis Mayor's office.

This is not just a harrowing statistic, it is thousands of people whose lives are at risk. Remember that next time you consider not wearing your mask outside or going to a party; in the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis, our city has failed to show adequate regard for an at-risk and predominantly Black population.

But the St. Louis government is not the only institution that has failed to appropriately safeguard the unhomed community. Despite there being a rapid testing shortage in St. Louis, SLU has clearly demonstrated its capability to secure and administer thousands of COVID-19 tests for free to students and faculty. They've also been able to make masks readily available. However, they've not made an effort to increase PPE supply or provide testing for people in the St. Louis community that need it the most—the unhomed population. This is in contradiction to the Jesuit mission of social justice and outreach for the community that SLU brands itself with.

Though SLU has felt a significant financial burden as a product of the pandemic, actions like distributing masks or additional tests would be financially inconsequential but are meaningful for the community. SLU students are taking action with initiatives like Labre Ministry with the Homeless, but it's time for SLU as an institution to start providing COVID-19 relief to the community. SLU's social justice mission should not only apply when it is convenient. It should apply universally.

Though the initial panic of the pandemic has passed, infrastructure to support the unhomed is still insufficient. Grassroots organizations and SLU student-led initiatives can only do so much to fix this widespread issue, whereas institutions have the money, power and political capital to alleviate suffering. With that in mind, I urge you to vote not only in presidential elections, but also in local and state ones. There are local politicians who are on our frontlines, fighting for vulnerable populations, racial equity and systemic change. Be part of that change, for the unhomed community and beyond.





# UYGHURS IN CHINA



**Aseya Siddiqua**

She/Her

First-Year

Neuroscience

School is a powerful time for Aseya. As a first year college student in the U.S., school is where she is meeting new people, joining exciting clubs and learning about herself. School is a haven for people like Aseya, who are given truth, freedom and the uncensored opportunity to express themselves.

School, in China, can be a method of the opposite: cultural annihilation and genocide. Since 2009, the Chinese government has undertaken the extreme surveillance, reeducation and detention of Uyghurs, leading to the “largest imprisonment on the basis of religion since the Holocaust,” according to ABC Australia. Uyghurs are a mostly Muslim, ethnic minority population in the Xinjiang region of China. Time Magazine states that of the 11 million people that identify as Uyghurs, over 1 million have been sent to what are effectively internment camps—where detainees are reeducated, tortured, murdered and forced into labor—at alarming speeds.

These “crimes” are baseless and the product of constant surveillance and ethnic targeting. Treating every Uyghur like a cultural threat, the Chinese government has identified behavioral indications of supposed religious extremism to single out Uyghurs, which allows the government to detain them for, according to Deutsche Welle, reasons as simple as growing a beard, fasting or applying for a passport. Uyghurs are being annihilated for acting as humans, citizens and Muslims, none of which should be policed or punished by the state.

The existence of these camps—wherein humans are forced into abortions, abuse, sterilization, electric shocks, labor, cultural erasure, family separation and humiliation—is possible because of the way the government has edged the majority to ostracize Uyghurs. The Chinese government enabled their persecution by preempting it with encouragement of the majority to hate the minority: conditioning the secular into bigoted opinions and intolerance of an already persecuted religious minority.

The passage of cultural heritage is being halted and annihilated; the Human Rights Watch and The New York Times report that Uyghur children are not allowed to be named anything “too Islamic,” are barred from participating in religious activities and separated from their families or put in state orphanages. This is genocide with children as the focus.

Qelbinur Sedik, an educator at the camps and founder of the Dutch Uyghur Human Rights Foundation (DUHRF), was subject to the abuse firsthand, as well as forced into indoctrinating her fellow Uyghur students. According to The Diplomat, Sedik felt that “her 28-year teaching career, during which she had worked loyally beyond the call of duty, seemed to have counted for nothing.”

Education in these camps has become a weapon of genocide. Disturbingly, however, Americans are almost entirely silent about the persecution of Uyghurs. This is another Holocaust that we sat in class saying we wouldn’t let happen. Educating ourselves is the first step.

## Being a College Student During 2020

It is very stressful;  
Very much  
It is very new;  
Never seen before  
We all shouted Happy New Year,  
Without knowing the year would be such a mess

Everything turned upside down  
Australia actually caught on fire  
WWIII almost happened  
And that was the just month of January  
My 18th birthday was also in January  
But honestly, I don’t remember anything from it  
Other than those restless nights  
Quiet whispers  
Mumbling prayers  
Tears rolling down my cheek  
And my brain telling me to stop overthinking

High school was somehow over  
And we were now supposed to act like grown-ups  
But God’s plan was different  
Instead of graduation, prom, and summer parties  
We were quarantined  
Locked in our rooms  
Alone with our own thoughts  
Thoughts that can kill some of us  
But I can’t do anything  
Being just a college student in 2020

Suddenly it was July  
And we were still protecting ourselves from Corona  
But our Black brothers and sisters were fighting for their lives  
Fighting for their rights  
Fighting for their voice  
In a country that preaches democracy  
But never was democratic  
In a country that stands for peace  
But never was peaceful  
In a country that stresses equality  
But never was equal  
And the list goes on  
But I am helpless  
Being just a college student in 2020

America is not the only one rotten  
A 2nd holocaust is happening in China  
And the world is silent  
I was writing an article on it  
Before it took over me  
And destroyed me  
My mind was consumed  
My sleep was non-existent  
There was no peace  
And I became emotionally drained  
But nothing hurts most  
Then knowing I can’t do anything  
Being just a college student in 2020

Time is passing faster than light-years  
And it is somehow October  
We are in the middle of a pandemic;  
An election that will decide whether our human rights should exist  
My rights as a woman of color  
My black friend’s right to live  
My friend’s right as a lesbian  
We all need to vote and save this country  
But I can’t even do that because I am an immigrant  
And again I am reminded I can’t do anything  
Being a college student in 2020



# HAS THE AMERICAN PROMISE BEEN FULFILLED?



**Justice Hill**

He/Him

Junior

Political Science

When I think of a promise, I think of an oath. I think of an agreement that should not be violated under any circumstances. When I make a promise to someone, I strive to hold true to that promise. Yet, there are promises that have been broken and left unfulfilled.

What is the American promise? What is the American Dream? The American Dream for African Americans stems back to even before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I Have a Dream” speech in which he had a dream where his kids could live in a nation where they would not be judged by the color of their skin. The American Dream for African Americans stems back to the longing for freedom and justice that the enslaved Africans had while singing freedom songs, such as “Wade in the Water,” “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Steal Away to Jesus.” These songs had a message of justice, love, peace and prosperity.

The American promise is the spirit of the Constitution—equality, liberty and justice—what America says it will be for all its inhabitants. Yet there was still work to be done for this promise to be fulfilled.

Words cannot describe the whirlwind that the year 2020 has been. COVID-19 impacted the entire nation. Schools were shut down, businesses and churches were closed, and stay-at-home orders were issued. However, COVID-19 did not stop injustice nor the protests that opposed it. Names like Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are proof of this. All of these names are of Black individuals that were murdered; all of which sparked nationwide protests and movements for justice for Black lives in America.

Many people discouraged the Black Lives Matter protests as something that was unsafe due to the pandemic; however this did not stop people from protesting with precautions. I myself was out during the protests and taking action for change. The time is always right to do what is right.

During all of the protests that I attended, I could hear cries of “Black Lives Matter,” and I was emphatically shouting

this myself. However, part of me was thinking that Black lives mattering is the minimum. Black lives more than matter. Black lives are amazing. Black lives are phenomenal. Black lives are beautiful. Black lives are vital. It is truly discouraging to see that we still even have to cry out “Black Lives Matter” and march to be heard in America.

But no matter the obstacles or roadblocks that present themselves, we can never be discouraged from moving in the right direction. Many advocates for justice were faced with adversity along their journeys, proving the African American quest for the American promise has never been anything short of difficult.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of the great leaders of the Civil Rights Movement arguing that, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Thurgood Marshall was the lawyer in the landmark ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* that overturned the ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* of “separate but equal.” Marshall also later became the first African American on the United States Supreme Court. Nat Turner led a rebellion that encouraged enslaved people not to tolerate bondage. Sojourner Truth encouraged the voices of African American women to be heard by utilizing her voice. One of Truth’s most famous speeches, entitled “Ain’t I a Woman?”, illuminates how the world would not be what it is today without the efforts of

women. Harriet Tubman was a leader that guided enslaved people to freedom using the Underground Railroad.

They all at one point or another were told to stop or wait or that they were doing too much. Many of these impactful people had their livelihoods, families and homes threatened. Day in and day out they did not allow the threats to discourage them. They continued moving forward. Myself and others this summer did not allow COVID-19 to stop us or tell us to wait. Yes, we did have on masks for safety, but we knew that we were advocating for something bigger than ourselves.

I think of Tubman, who walked through rivers and forests in seclusion to bring humans to freedom—even without a GPS for directions, she knew the way.

Faith has been the navigation system along this journey for African Americans to reach the esteemed American Promise. However, faith without works is dead and promises require consistency and endurance. One of my favorite Biblical lessons of all time comes not just from the book itself, but rather is brought





to life through the words and wisdom of my grandmother. She says, "The race is not given to the swift nor the strong but unto them that endure to the end." The protests this summer and the recent protests on the campus of Saint Louis University (SLU) highlight endurance and will lead to the American promise being fulfilled.

I can greatly recall the events that took place on the campus of SLU on September 25, 2020. At 11:30 am, I received word that an act of ignorance and utter disrespect took place. The messages of justice for Breonna Taylor, written in chalk by students on the Clocktower, were written over with "Trump 2020" and, "The Court was correct, and Breonna was a criminal."

After I heard the news of what occurred, I couldn't help but feel obligated to make a change. I began asking myself many questions. Who would do something like this? Why would someone disrespect the life of Breonna Taylor even further than the court already did? Who felt comfortable enough to do this? As I asked myself these questions, I knew that I needed to do more. These questions would not receive answers without the community taking action.

I immediately made my way to the Clocktower and began advocating for justice and advocating for change at SLU. Other students and I took the words of injustice written on the clocktower as motivation for growth and positive change. Recall Dr. King's notion that injustice in America was a threat to justice everywhere. We now felt this on our campus.

Did America promise that I, as an African American male, would be able to live my life without fear? Am I able to press onward and upward to make my dreams on Earth become reality through the American promise? Time and time again throughout my life there have been obstacles that have come about that have forced me to make decisions. I could either allow these obstacles to discourage me or turn these obstacles into opportunity. The journey to the American promise being fulfilled is one that has been going on for centuries and persists at our campus protests. It is clear to see that the ink has not dried on the equal and civil rights amendments of the United States Constitution.

When thinking about walking through the valley of the shadow of death and the

unfulfilled American Promise, I can't help but think about my experiences last June. I had just completed a summer fellowship at the University of Alabama School of Law and, as I merged onto the highway and observed the Alabama mountains and the various twists and turns that came along with them, I thought that the beauty of the day would last for the duration of my drive back home to South Carolina.

Soon, I saw the sunshine and clear skies transform into clouds and darkness and it began to rain extremely hard. People in the far right lane pulled off to the side of the road to wait out the storm. I was barely able to see the blinking of their emergency lights. I myself was ready to pull over to the side as well.

However, the level of force that the rain was exerting increased and made it impossible for me to see anything in front of, behind or beside me. Therefore, I had no choice but to keep moving forward. I turned my music all the way down, decreased my speed and began to pray that I would get out of this storm safely. I was driving by faith and not by sight, and slowly but surely the level of the rain began to decrease and I was able to see out of my windshield once again. I had progressed to the point where I was no longer in the storm and met with the sunshine and clear skies that I had seen at the beginning of my trip.

What I came to realize is that those that pulled over to the side of the road during the storm were still in the midst of the storm and not able to see the sunshine and clear skies that I was now able to see. As a nation we cannot allow the presence of the storms—COVID-19, racism, discrimination and hatred—to prevent us from being the amazing and beautiful people and nation that we were created to be.

I am longing for a change to come. I am longing for the American promise to truly be fulfilled. I am longing for the day where I can say that everyone is living their dream. That day has not arrived yet. However, I am faithful—as were Dr. King, Marshall, Turner, Truth and Tubman—that one day the promise will be fulfilled, that each obstacle, march and protest is a step forward in fighting for that promise.





# FROM FOUNDING

## THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND



**Patrick Hunt**

He/Him

Sophomore

Neuroscience

In a landmark 2017 study by the Pew Research Institute, it was reported that for the first time in history, less than half of the population of the United States identified as spiritual and religious. Conversely, the number of individuals identifying as spiritual but not religious rose to 27% of the population. This represents a major shift in demographics, especially for a nation that had once sported a spiritual and religious population of 59% as little as five years prior to the study.

Another shift of note is the rise in the religious “nones” and the popularity of non-Christian religions. The number of people who identified as unaffiliated with a faith tradition rose from 24% in 2015 to 26% in 2018-2019, and the number of people who identified with a non-Christian religion rose from 6% to 7% according to Pew Research Institute.

With this in mind, it is necessary for the people of the United States to consider religion and to ask themselves what sort of role they wish for it to play in society at large.

Historically, religion has always been a major part of American life. Many of the earliest European settlers were incredibly religious individuals. People such as John Winthrop, one of the earliest Puritan settlers of North America and the eventual governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, believed that they were building holy communities in the service of God. While this belief has mostly fallen out of favor in modern America, the idea that the United States was somehow set apart and a “City on a Hill,” as he called it, would enter into the national zeitgeist and surge into prominence during the Cold War period.

Here, it gave politicians the historical legacy necessary to differentiate godly America from the

“godless” communists of the Soviet Union. It was during this period that many familiar adages such as “In God We Trust” was put on currency and that the phrase “One Nation Under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance.

It is undoubtable that Christianity has had an influence on the culture of many Americans, however, it is inaccurate to say that the United States is a Christian nation. When the Bill of Rights was written, it was done with the goal of establishing a pluralistic nation. The Wars of Faith in Europe were still vivid in the minds of the Founding Fathers and it was decided that the best way to preserve the American Experiment from internecine conflict was to enshrine the religious liberties of all individuals.

The Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

This clause of the Bill of Rights states in no uncertain terms that the law of the nation was to show no favor to any given religion. In the eyes of the law, all religions, faith traditions and lack thereof are equal.

For the United States, the aforementioned transition from a heavily religious society to a more spiritual society is not an inherently good or bad thing, it is simply a shift away from traditionally white Protestant faiths that were more common during the nation’s founding.

The question of whether or not the United States is largely turning away from spirituality is fairly easy to answer: it is not. Over the last decade

# TO ANTI-RACISM

## SPIRITUALITY IN CHRISTIAN AMERICA

the number of people who identify with some sort of spirituality, whether it be in a formal religious organization or a more personal faith has remained remarkably constant, as according to that Pew Research study from earlier. What is changing in America is a certain disillusionment with formal religion, a rise in popularity of the personal spiritual journey and a shift in the kinds of beliefs that people hold dear.

Dr. Rachel Lindsey, an assistant professor at Saint Louis University and a leading expert on religion in the United States, argues that matters of race and racial justice have always been points of controversy in American religion. Lindsey believes that there is no consensus on what racism in American religions means, saying, “American Christians in the 1840s were literally divided over slavery. Southern denominations broke apart from their fellowships in order to defend enslavement.”

She finds that, “Anti-racism is one of the biggest issues in American religion today—not surprisingly, it’s a big issue in American life... right now, and that’s often the case; that religion and public life and American culture are always entangled with one another and this moment is no exception.”

The matter of racial justice is the question of our age for all American religions, and some sects are seen to actively work for the cause of racial justice and equality while others are not. With these divisions and lines in the sand drawn, there is a strong case that this demographic shift from “spiritual and religious” to simply “spiritual” is due to a discontentment in devouts at institutional policy and a search for something that better suits their personal beliefs.

Religion and spirituality will play an incredibly

large role in the racial justice of today just as it did in the Civil Rights movement of the latter half of the 20th century. The only question that remains is what the religious and spiritual landscape will look like once our current segment of American history is brought to a close.



# "NORMAL"

## How Capitalism Sets Us Up to Fail



**Kylie Hull**

She/Her

Sophomore

Marketing and

Visual Communication

Our nation is driven by the glorification of the dead American Dream, an ideal shaped around the notion that if you work hard enough, you can reach prosperity. From a young age, we look forward to the days of being rich and famous, but it is something very few of us actually obtain. Our children grow up watching Annie make her big move to the mansion with rich Daddy Warbucks, and our high schoolers enter a land of magic and envy when they read of the extravagant life of Jay Gatsby. Our culture is built around the idolization of celebrities who make more money in one day than most people make in their lifetime.

The United States is a nation built on a dog-eat-dog, every-man-for-himself economic system. We glamorize extreme wealth and spend every moment from birth equipping ourselves with the tools to be a productive member of society. This highly competitive and individualistic foundation has created a harsh and apathetic national mindset, and the effects of this societal dynamic can be seen in the recent American reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Having an economic system in which we must step over one another to survive has desensitized Americans to the struggles of our neighbors and resulted in a society that values profit, personal freedom and individual success over the lives and dignity of the people around us, making America an inherently selfish and destructive country that is unequipped for a pandemic that demands empathy.

To understand the shocking and unique response of America to the pandemic, it is essential to understand the main pillars of American ideals that have shaped every facet of our functioning. Through the events of the past year, it has become abundantly clear that America is nothing without capitalism, and every institution of our daily lives is wrapped in this complex, prominent system.

Through analyzing the textbook "American Capitalism" by Edward Baptist and Louis Hyman, one can gain a deeper

understanding of the origins, implications and effects of capitalism and its place within American society. While the collection of pieces within the textbook provides a wide variety of insight and knowledge, a particular statement from an entry by John Huey, titled "Where Managers Will Go" stands out.

Huey highlights the brutal reality of capitalism, noting that "the survivors will be those who—if necessary—take a moment to lick their wounds and dust themselves off, then collect their talents, steel their confidence, and strike out looking for challenging new opportunities in a restructured world." He highlights the limited good a country gets from referring to its citizens as "survivors" who collect themselves after being harmed by the system. The default of American society in which the only purpose in life is to survive within harsh webs of production seems to create citizens who merely live to work and work to live.

Where there is capitalism, there is an inevitable presence of rampant individualism. Within the walls of American society, Ronald Osborn of *America: The Jesuit Review*, wrote in 2018 that "utilitarian individualism sees people as self-made and self-maximizing creatures, motivated primarily by appetites and entering into rational social contracts not out of any noble concern for the common good but rather to advance their own interests, security and profits."

As living beings placed in a cycle of survival such as capitalism, it is then essential for life to fight for one's own security. When the society around you places priority on production and competition over community and holistic well-being, the same society begins to produce people who are detached from any form of communal living and instead devoted to personal security.

The focus on oneself within a capitalist economy eventually blossoms into an isolated view on the world, in which all expression, fulfillment and activity is for the individual. Every action is for the progression of oneself, whether financially or emotionally and as time moves on, we fall into a deep environment in which we are living alongside one another; yet we are not living with one another. It is with this mindset that we have developed and evolved American society, and



it is with this mindset that we have watched almost every system around us crumble in less than a year. This impact can be seen now more than ever within the current pandemic that is ravaging our country.

When a society composed of self-focused individuals is met with a fatal issue that requires group communication, unity and cooperation to overcome, there is no doubt room for disaster. The rise of the all too familiar “anti-mask” movement can be seen as the manifestation of the individualistic, freedom fighting ideals of American society.

In an article for The Guardian, journalist Lauren Aratani writes about an anti-mask group, explaining, “Reopen NC, a group that opposes shutdown orders in North Carolina, said masks were ‘muzzles’ that, along with things like mandatory temperature checks, were ‘ways our freedom is being eroded.’” Simple tasks such as wearing a mask or having a thermometer held to your head upon entering a store have become so politicized that people are claiming that the very core of America is being challenged. If minor inconveniences and public safety measures challenge the comfort of our nation, what does that say about our entitlement? Out of every country in the world, why do Americans feel so threatened by the idea of communal sacrifice and caregiving?

Along with the anti-mask movement, the overall nation has seen an intense push for “normal.” Americans are fighting for the reopening of businesses on a scale that directly conflicts with the warnings of health officials. When attempting to understand this issue, look no further than the pride and joy of America: Disneyland. A symbol of American happiness has been no exception to the harsh consequences of the pandemic and, according to a L.A. Times article by Soumya Karlamarga, “The closure of Disneyland has had ripple effects throughout the city of Anaheim, where it is the largest employer. Unemployment in the city is at 12%, the same as during the Great Recession.”

In examining issues such as anti-maskers and the rapid push for reopening, it is easy and valid to feel frustration toward individuals who seem to lack regard for public health and common sense. However, as a society aiming for change for the better, it is essential to look beyond the superficial arguments between one another and to question why we are so desperately fighting for freedom and an open country. Why is the reopening of a theme park a life or death issue? Why has our economy been set up so that a few months of reduced business

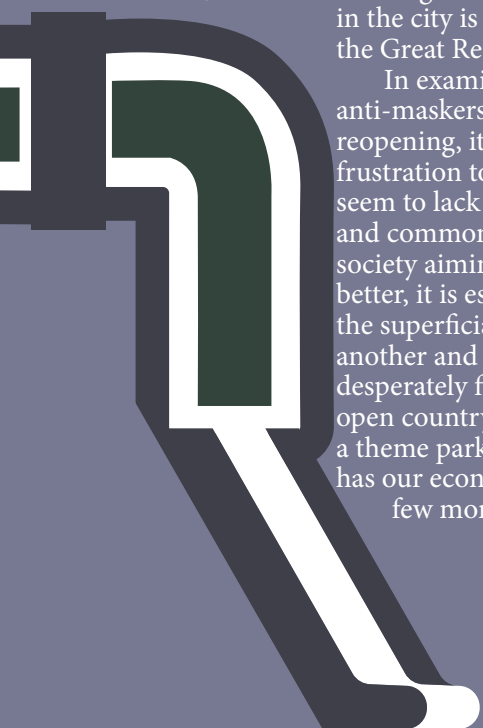
can empty families’ fridges and cause mass evictions? More importantly, why are we aggressively fighting for the ability to go back to work during a time when we should be entirely concerned with the safety of our loved ones? Why accept this as our “normal”?

This chaotic scramble for survival is a direct result of the roots of capitalism and individualism within our nation. Every move we make is in pursuit of production, security and progression. While it is easy to hate one another and feel a deep animosity toward the selfish people around us, it is also crucial to understand the ways in which we got to this point. Just because this is the way things have always been doesn’t mean that it is the only way, pushing to go back to “normal” is still pushing us back to a flawed system.

This is especially apparent when looking at the response of other nations to the virus. According to an Axios article, New Zealand holds a 95% chance that the virus has been eliminated within the nation’s biggest city. New Zealand implemented some of the harshest lockdown restrictions around the world, both through action from the government and—importantly—cooperation from the public. The disastrous levels of death, unemployment, fear and conflict that have erupted in America as a response to the pandemic are not the only possible responses. The “normal” that we face does not have to be what we accept, nor should it be.

It is easy to look at the widespread anxiety, instability and suffering that is sweeping through America and feel like this is an inevitable process that we must endure. While pandemics are uncontrollable and unpredictable, the structures that we have set to protect us from such catastrophes are within our control. Going into a pandemic with such high economic volatility that a proposed two week lockdown could be a matter of life or death for a small business owner should not be accepted. Having national ideals that justify the endangering of lives due to refusal to wear a mask, in the name of freedom, should not be accepted. It is due time that we challenge the structure of our society.

Evolving our “normal” will take discomfort, and it will take upheaval, but systemic change is crucial for our nation to truly be a healthy and liberated society. Our people are held down by the burden of contributing to a mass system of production, consumption and survival. The pandemic has shown that our foundation of capitalistic, individualistic and unending competition is one that, in the end, doesn’t ever truly serve us in our pursuit of a meaningful or sustained life. The crumbling of this foundation has been centuries in the making, but it is impossible to look past the cracks now. If our systems aren’t in existence to protect, serve and support us, then why are they still standing?





# SOUTH ASIAN MINORITY VOICES ARE CALLING...



**Sara Parikh**  
She/Her  
First-Year  
Neuroscience

“My ‘Raj’ will come back, my ‘Raj’ will come back.”

My mom can still hear her aunt echoing these words while blankly rocking in her chair in the dark. Did ‘Raj’ come back? No. He was murdered with a knife to his back on the day of his wedding. My mom lost her cousin when she was just 15 years old. But this was just one murder in a series of violence against religious minorities throughout South Asia. Depending on the particular location, different groups have been persecuted by religious majorities throughout the region.

The Kashmir region has always been focal to politics in South Asia. When Great Britain ended its rule over the region in the mid 1900s, the imperialists split Colonial India into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan sections. They wanted Hindus and Muslims to feel different, which created a sense of religious-based nationalism regarding both newly independent countries. Currently, in Pakistan, Hindus are the minority while Muslims are the majority. In India, however, this is reversed. This means that South Asia sees both religions—and many others—as being both victims and perpetrators of violence. Jammu and Kashmir, however, is a third section where both Muslimism and Hindus are subject to persecution by India and Pakistan respectively.

Popular Western news sources have made attempts to report the conditions in Kashmir, but only tell one-sided narratives that frequently fail to include the voices of persecuted minorities. Popular media ignores a major humanitarian crisis. Much of America’s ignorance toward Dharmic oppression can be attested to this pattern of Western media failing to recognize the strife between religious minority and majority communities such as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and Jains in South Asia.

Violence against Hindus, for example, is still very prevalent today, which is evident through the many forms of abuse Hindus face in the region. They have an extensive history of being raped, killed, threatened, forced to convert and denounce Hinduism solely for their religious beliefs. Hindus globally are suffering in silence as you read this right now.

The Hindu minority in Kashmir has gone through centuries of seven mass exoduses. The horrors of the 1990 exodus still ring in the ears of remaining Kashmiri Hindus who lost everything that decade, specifically on January 19, 1990. That night, on loud speakers, Kashmiris heard three words directed to religious minorities—“*Ralive, Tsaliv ya Galive*” (either convert to Islam, leave the land or perish).

Today, the seventh mass exodus exists only in the memories of Kashmiri refugees who have yet to return home. Sadly, this violence is not solely isolated in history, as Hindus are still victims of rampant and violent anti-Hinduism in India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan and more. Already a minority in Kashmir, Hindus shrank from an estimated 140,000 in the late 1980s to

only 19,865 by 1998, according to Al Jazeera. Decades after the 1990 exodus, Kashmiri Hindus still live in refugee camps while others are dispersed all over the world; their stories and history forgotten. Today, there are fewer than 2,700 Hindus left in the Kashmir Valley according to Al Jazeera.

Upsettingly, some in India have been using these moments in history to villanize Muslim communities and further the religious divides. Not only in India, but throughout the globe, Muslims face similar persecution and violence daily. Following 9/11 and the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, the world has seen an increase in wrongful Islamophobia according to Indian-American author and activist Arundhati Roy. In the United States, the Council on American-Islamic Relations counts over 1,164 acts of Islamophobic hate crimes within the past five years. In India, an increase in extremist Hindu nationalism has led to Islamophobic discrimination which is evident through President Modi’s Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) which allows non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to gain their Indian citizenship. This targets Muslim refugees by unjustly denying them equal access to gain citizenship under the CAA.

In the heavily militarized region of Kashmir, both the Muslim majority and Hindu minority have been subject to human rights violations and violence from both Pakistani and Indian forces as the two regions claim Kashmiri land according to BBC. The Kashmir region sees persecution of both Hindus and Muslims—but why?

Beginning with the partition in 1947 by the British rule in colonial India, both anti-Hinduism and Islamophobia have run unbridled throughout the world, especially in the part of South Asia that was once colonial India. The two regions and religions have been pitted against each other, but it has not always been this way. What we see here is the product of imperialism, which creates hate and violence. People are not born evil. Extreme nationalism was and still is a divisive power, fueled by the British, that gave birth to anti-Hinduism and Islamophobia. According to the Minority Rights Group International, Hindus in Pakistan are treated as anti-state elements who are victims of discrimination, genocide, exploitation and abuse. Former member of the Parliament of Pakistan, Farahnaz Ispahani claimed that after the partition in 1947, minorities such as Hindus, Sikhs and Christians comprised 23% of Pakistan. In 2013, that number declined to about 3%, and continues to dwindle. As a result, Hindus in Pakistan lack equal access to education, employment and social advancement. Muslims in India, on the other hand, are currently 9% more likely to be categorized as suffering than Hindus according to the global analytics and advice firm, Gallup.

Even during a pandemic, the Pakistani government

# ...BUT THE WEST ISN'T PICKING UP



has revealed their blatant faith-based discrimination by denying COVID-19 relief aid to Hindus, Christians, Shia Muslims and other minorities in the country, according to the United States Commission of International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). On the other side, The New York Times found that violence against Indian Muslim communities in March of 2020 increased significantly because they were falsely blamed for spreading COVID-19 and singled out by the Indian government. Similar, but not identical, persecution happens next door.

Despite the ever-existent abuse of minorities in South Asia, organizations such as the United Nations and popular Western media remain silent. These issues may seem very far-off and abroad, and for many, this may be the first time reading about the persecution of Hindus and Muslims.

Silent Americans are part of the problem. Have you ever done Yoga, ordered a “chai tea” latte, wished bad Karma on someone or laughed at an Indian accent on television? If so, you may have been part of the Western world’s appropriation and whitewashing of South Asian culture, while persecution persists.

We were made fun of for wearing Mehndi, but now henna is a trendy booth at carnivals. Hindu girls are bullied for wearing a bindi to school, but white girls appropriate them at music festivals. We were scared to open our lunch boxes at school because kids made faces of disgust at the smell of our spicy food, but Americans can consume turmeric products to lead a healthy lifestyle.

We see our gods, goddesses and religious symbols mistreated as tacky decor to curate a trendy boho vibe. Under the British rule in India, our people were punished for practicing Asana Yoga, according to a Medium article, but Americans are allowed to turn it into a multi-million dollar industry while giving no credit to Hinduism. The Western world has yet to figure out how to celebrate and appreciate South Asian culture, rather than leeching off of it to create new American trends while bodies pile up every day.

Even in the United States, the relationship between anti-Hinduism and Islamophobia is evident. Congresswoman and former Presidential Candidate Tulsi Gabbard opened up about her experience with anti-Hindu bigotry, as her republican opponent claimed that “Hinduism is incompatible with the US constitution” and that a “vote for Tulsi Gabbard is a vote for Satan,” according to Times of India and another Medium article.

But Gabbard represents a problem in itself. The Congresswoman has been criticized for being Islamophobic, according to The Week, while being the victim of anti-Hinduism. This

shows how the Hindu-Muslim connection between facing intolerance and being intolerant exists, even though the Western media might pretend it doesn’t.

Only focusing on Hindu’s intolerance—and not the anti-Hinduism they face—is problematic. Just the same as it is to only discuss Muslims’ intolerance and not the very real Islamophobia that they face. Simply recognizing that your people are suffering does not correlate with extremist nationalism. Refusing to see the whole story does.

And this is where I stand. The suffering of the Hindu community is one that is close to my heart because my family and community have been victims of anti-Hinduism. At the same time, I recognize that many other minority communities globally are suffering and that many governments and countries are not taking proper actions to help these marginalized populations. I stand for the marginalized groups in each region. In India, we must stand for the Muslim minority. In Pakistan, we must stand for the Hindu minority. In Kashmir, we must stand for the people rather than the governments fighting for the land. These are the voices that are silenced by the religious majority, the government and Western media.

We as Americans cannot claim to care about human rights while we are turning a blind eye toward some of the longest and largest humanitarian crises. What we can do is listen to the voices of the oppressed minorities and then amplify their voices. We can do our part by staying educated on important issues; for this matter specifically, the Hindu American Foundation is a great source for further reading on discrimination against Hindus and other minorities on a global scale, including the United States, and the Council on American-Islamic Religions provides context and clarity to the persecution of Muslims worldwide.

There has always been the capacity for peace between religions. While getting out of a rickshaw, my great-uncle was almost killed in the same fashion as my mom’s cousin. But my great-uncle was saved by the driver—a Muslim man who stopped the Muslim attacker from killing my great-uncle—a Hindu. My great-uncle is here today because of the driver’s compassion toward a man regardless of his religion.

There exists perpetual religious persecution around the world, and Muslims and Hindus are by no means the only ones involved. By staying aware and continuously educating ourselves about the minorities around us, we can help end the violence by and against all religions. Like the rickshaw driver, who stood up for a man different than him amidst a time of tension between the two religions, hopefully one day, we will all love our brothers and sisters regardless of their religion, region or race.



# To first generation students



**Ami Patel**

She/Her

Senior

Health Information  
Management

You may not know me, but I have been exactly where you are right now. Choosing what to do after high school is hard. There are so many opportunities in the world, but as a first-generation college student you may not have the experience you need to be as successful as you can be. We all come from different backgrounds but the one thing in common we have is that we are the first of our families to go to college. This can be exciting yet fearful at the same time. The opportunities in front of us are endless, but the pressure is consuming.

The first-generation college experience is beautiful and unique, but it is not without its problems. By understanding the obstacles of our community, we can be better equipped to help each other—and ourselves—for years to come.

Do not let fear take over your life. Coming into college, many first-generation students choose majors that will keep their parents and community happy. In fact, according to a study done by the National Center for Education Statistics approximately 48% of first generation college students choose science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) fields. STEM majors are seen as the best and most practical to move forward. However, choosing a STEM major and suffering for four years is not always practical. Our backgrounds tell us that being a doctor or a lawyer will help us get ahead because that is all our parents have seen and that has been engraved into our minds, but the truth is there are millions of opportunities out there for us, we just have to keep our eyes open.

As you drown in applications, informational meetings and online tests telling you what you should do in the future, take a peek inside yourself and think about what your heart is telling you to do. Whether that is the career you have dreamt of for years or something you came across recently that you think you will be good at.

Once in college, you may come across professors or peers who do not see your potential. You will be uncomfortable in class at points. You will constantly be reminded this place was not made for someone like you. In fact, the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics says that 33% of first generation college students drop out within the first three years.

But at home, typical family quarrels can devolve into a family member's defense of their "street smarts,"



or not taking your new collegiate path seriously. You will constantly be put down, but do not let this pressure stop you from blossoming into the student you were always meant to be.

It may be scary right now but perhaps the biggest thing you can do in the future is use your experiences and newfound knowledge to help others in whatever capacity you choose. You may feel alone right now, but remember there are thousands of us all over the country. The Center for First-Generation Student Success counts that approximately 56% of students within a study of 89,000 were first generation college students on-campus (and online) across America.

As first-generation students, our expectations of college life mainly stem from TV shows or articles on the internet—we do not have an accurate description of college until we get there. You will need guidance whether that is during the application process or during your first few weeks at school. You will be able to identify with people



# choosing what to do next...

throughout your life that will be willing to teach you about these experiences. Leaning on these people may seem like you are a burden but remember that a support system teaches you about perseverance and you are ultimately preparing yourself to become a mentor in the future.

Personally, for me, this meant helping my younger brother move ahead, but for you it could be something totally different. However, reaching this point of being able to help others is a tough path. According to the American Psychological Association, 20.8% of first-generation students suffer from depression, anxiety or other obstructive mental illnesses during their college years.

Please do not forget to take care of yourself. Having a good support system will not only help you in the educational aspect, but also mentally you will feel at ease with the people who are there for you. Also, do not forget to speak to your family. Every year, 23% of first-generation students describe conflicts with family as a leading contributor to their mental health state, according to The Cooperative Institutional Research Program's Higher

Education Research Institute in Los Angeles at the University of California.

Moving away from home is scary, especially when you come from a family as sheltered as mine. The truth, however, is that moving away can help you find yourself. You are able to find the person you have always wanted to be, instead of being who you were molded to be at home. It is exciting to find yourself, but we always have to remember where we come from. Remember the feeling of waking up on a holiday and celebrating with your family or submitting your first application; this may be something small for others, but huge for your family.

There are a million scary things about applying to college and actually going there, but look at how many people are rooting for you. We all want you to succeed and make society a better place for generations to come. We are an inspiration, an example

that anything is possible. Our parents came here with close to nothing and no knowledge of how this country works, but look at yourself now. You are making their dreams come true, and for them you have to keep striding until the end. We are the ever-evolving American Dream.

Take advantage of your resources and never shy away from asking for help. Always remember that you are not just the first who chose to go to college in your family, you are the first who had the opportunity. Right now it may seem impossible, but as you move forward in this process you are making it a lot easier for the people that will come after you and this is just the start.





# THE COVID-19 CLASSROOM AND UNSPOKEN CHALLENGES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

The light blue mask concealed his hot and heavy breaths as they engulfed his face. His wide eyes lingered at my mother and flashed back to me. Terrified and confused, he continuously ripped his mask off every 30 seconds. I will never forget the darting eyes of my 12-year old-brother as we attempted to get him inside the dentist's office in June of 2020. The aftermath of a surge of cases and deaths from COVID-19 was just as egregious as it was dangerous. The lack of understanding regarding the precautions from my brother stemmed from the disability he had.

In the midst of his autism, which rendered him nonverbal, he had to face the realities of the pandemic: one of these included wearing masks. It may seem like an innocuous request, however, in the eyes of someone like my brother, this was an uphill battle that he—and my family—faced. Half of the dentist visit consisted of my sisters and I trying to keep his mask on and holding his arms down to prevent him from unnecessarily touching things.

This inexorable reality not only faces him but, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the approximately 2.8 million kids in America that also have disabilities. The term disability is an umbrella term for almost any range of issues that can vary from learning disabilities to blindness and hard of hearing. Students tackling these problems on their own is quite difficult, but the added preface of a pandemic to this lifestyle makes it even more rigorous. The undoubtedly necessary but seemingly palpable COVID-19 regulations are not only restrictive, they are vehemently hindering the already limited routines and habits of those with disabilities. Consequently, this seeps into the educational aspect of their lives.

COVID-19 has had a colossal impact on schools worldwide. The precarious halt to education in the spring of 2020 left students, parents and staff wondering what the next step would be. Those involved in the special education community corralled an uncertainty in their future. The



**Aliyah Adnan**

She/Her

Sophomore

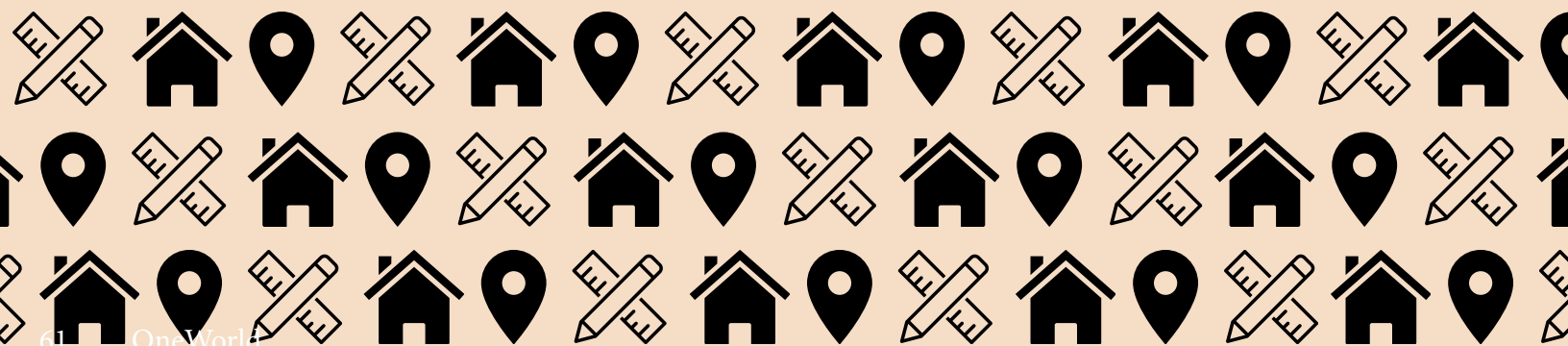
Neuroscience

airborne disease proliferated an intense fear among families. With the virus heavily infectious and transferable, staying at home appears to be the best alternative, especially for those students with specific needs. However, this sudden shift in the learning environment could potentially undo the years of work put into those students and their routines.

Students in special education are more inclined to substantial dexterity learning, so the swift change of learning through a screen is beyond burdensome. The hands-on learning, which is essential to the improvement of these students, is no longer available—which causes the progress made by many therapists, instructors and teachers to wane. Most students, with an already low attention span, are now forced to forego their practical learning to entirely online based instruction. Bad internet connection and frozen screens can further addle the limited attention the students would have. How can we curb the negative impact of the diminishing progress of students in special education, while they are staying home—shielded from the virus?

This adverse effect not only harms students but it can be complicated for staff as well. Because of the sudden shift in schooling, special education staff had to alter their courses to fit into activities that the students could do at home, without facility-level resources. Primary special education teachers have to address a brand new method of trying to keep the student both focused and engaged. These unfamiliar techniques are rather difficult but absolutely necessary in order to keep staff and students safe.

The constant company, guidance and aid from in-school therapists and instructors have been totally switched



to a parental level of assistance. Activities and lessons have to be converted to be doable by the student at home with the limited resources they might have. And not only is the primary level of education within disabilities heavily affected, the secondary and college levels have also been. Saint Louis University's Director of Disability Services, Kendra Johnston, has been on the frontlines while dealing with special education shifts during the pandemic. COVID-19 has impacted her role as faculty of the Office of Disability Services because, "As with anyone, it has been a very stressful transition... figuring out ways to support our students and to ensure that they're getting an adequate education through this has been sometimes challenging. Particularly when it comes to ensuring that they're getting the right resources, such as a student who is deaf or a student who has a learning disability or ADHD."

In terms of the safety and efficiency of learning styles—in-person or online—Johnston believes that "each student learns differently. We do have students that say online works best for them but I would say that through this experience I learned that for students with disabilities in person is often the better option." She thinks this is because the students have easy access to their professors and have extra clarifications, and there are significantly less distractions in a classroom than sitting at home.

She also finds that "students might also have an easier time being motivated to be engaged in an academic in person environment." But Johnston doesn't understate the necessity of following COVID-19 precautions, saying

## IT'S A PANDEMIC - WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER OPTIONS RIGHT NOW.

that the health of the professors and other students needs to be taken into consideration, because there are also students that have medical disabilities such as autoimmune disorders.

Something she said truly resonated and stuck with me and my experience with my brother. She noted that, "This pandemic made us all learn how to do things differently and more accommodating to situations that are out of our control. It's a pandemic—we don't have other options right now." This is a poignant message that speaks to everyone dealing with the sordid mess people have been put in because of the pandemic. Faculty and those concomitant with students in special education were forced to ameliorate their teaching practices. Certainly, however, their efforts do not go unnoticed. Johnston says, "A lot of the times I hope I'm making the right decisions and doing the best to provide what we can."

Parents everywhere who have students with special education needs say that the lack of school can cause potential harm. They say their children's academics aren't simply surpassing them—their crucial developmental milestones along with social and cognitive skills are suffering too. The lack of in-person connection and the psychological effect of copying the behavior of those around them are abating since the transition to remote learning.

My mother, Shakeela Ilmi, is one of the many parents concerned for the holistic well-being of their children who have special education needs. I asked her how she thinks the pandemic has impacted my brother's education. She stated that, "It has reshaped a lot of areas of his life. His routine has significantly changed and there has been a great decrease in social activity because he doesn't interact with his peers."

When asked which learning method she thinks is better for him due to the virus—online instruction or in-person—she replied tactfully with, "In terms of safety, online learning because his health comes first. But education-wise, the in-person would be much better for him because of the hands-on learning he needs from his therapists and teachers."

My brother's disability of severe autism facilitates the unintentional noncompliance with COVID-19 regulations, such as putting on a mask or keeping his distance from other people. If he were to continue an in-person education during the pandemic, it would involve the utmost complications. My mother, like most parents of students in special education, found a great solace in her student's education prior to the abrupt learning transition in the spring. The new accrued methods to try to keep the students engaged—at the very least—has been debilitating.

While understanding there is nothing that can definitively solve these problems at hand right now, the public should be supportive to the special education community and fight for them. Students impacted by the virus are in a place of despondence and have been averted from a proper education.

This issue won't go away until the virus does. Follow the COVID-19 regulations and safeguards put in place—not just for you, but for others, like those in the special education community. They are relying on everyone to help get rid of the disease that plagues their education.



# “An Easier Kind of Change” : Incentivizing the Centering of the Black Working Class



**Beatrice Beirne**

She/Her

Senior

Political Science and  
American Studies

Before the clatter of “The Kardashians” or the side eyes of “The Office,” American television was aglow with the vibrancy of another workplace: blue collar families. With shows like “The Goldbergs” and “Mama,” the 1940s were regarded by many as the “golden age of the ethnic working class situation comedy” according to scholar George Lipsitz, showcasing life of the persevering European immigrant experience. Detectably, however, there were people left out of this supposed golden age: Asian immigrants, Latinx and blended families—to name a few. Black Americans, alternatively, had a decidedly different fate.

Flung onto the small screen from its radio past was “Amos ‘n’ Andy,” an all-accounts insensitive television show following the life of two binary Black brothers. Beginning on the airwaves with white actors portraying Black characters, the program relied on stereotypes and racist imagery to entertain audiences. It went from Blackface to caricatures - while being the only representation of Black working class America on television.

“Amos ‘n’ Andy” was just one step in the defilement of the Black working class by the American mainstream—and it certainly hasn’t been the last. An immutable pattern of exploitation comes through mitigating the actual evils of slavery—in instances such as a 2015 McGraw-Hill textbook calling slaves “immigrants” and “workers”—to the U.S. Small Business Administration’s finding that Black entrepreneurs are more likely to be undercapitalized when launching their businesses. In an increasingly gig-based economy—where 44% of Black Uber drivers, contract artists and deliverers rely on it for their primary income according to Morning Consult—it’s important to consider how America’s historical methods of Black subordination in the workforce haven’t halted simply because of the passage of time.

Rather, the methods of exploitation have just evolved.

Black people used to be exploited in the workforce by this thing called slavery—something you might not know if you were reading that McGraw-Hill textbook from earlier. Then, there was an era of legal slavery in the Jim Crow South, manifested in racially biased policing and “Black codes,” that many (very reasonably) argue continue today. Currently, inmates can be forced to

provide free or low-cost labor, like the national average of 63 cents per hour, according to the Prison Policy Initiative, and a disproportionate 38.4% of those inmates are Black.

The American workforce lopsidedly shifted beginning in the Jim Crow era, as the de facto racism of the North was tantalizingly less heinous for Black workers than the de jure hell of the South. Exodusters—Black, aspiring farmers—moved to the Midwest while others migrated to industrial jobs in the North. This resulted in a transformation in the labor market that looked drastically different from the South’s former agrarian economy. Following this was the Harlem Renaissance, wherein enclaves of Black Americans blossomed into artistic fields. Setting the stage for the Civil Rights Era, the Harlem Renaissance saw cultural advancements in literature, theater, fashion, music and visual arts, opening new artistic doors for Black creators in the labor market. Beginning in the 1940s, the Civil Rights Era saw improvement—albeit incomplete and not without opposition—in workplace equality legislation, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

An incalculable number of exchanges and events happened between the first enslaved people and today in America—including the War on Drugs, the Great Migration, the #MeToo movement and intersectional wage gaps—and all significantly contribute to the metabolism of the Black working class. Ultimately, Black people today work jobs with “the highest injury risk on average, even adjusting for education and gender,” according to a study from the National Library of Medicine, and are also most likely to report quid pro quo sexual harassment at work. This doesn’t even include the exploitation of Black college athletes—who were unpaid up until 2019 and are often subject to verbal and physical abuse at the hand of white multi-millionaire coaches and administrators, according to The New York Times. There are two particular phenomena that indicate the permeating effects of the exploitation of the Black working class today: (1) rigged representation and (2) corporate curation.

The representation of the Black working class has been troubled from the start, and the implications of this record of subordination are clear in perceptions of the modern labor market. Labor has been tied to the Black cultural experience to the point that Black adults, who are “overrepresented in underpaying jobs,” according to a study in the Journal of Career Development, face internalized racism that leads to a “devalued and dismissed” worldview and “lower career aspiration.” This isn’t unfounded; out of the 50 Black actors nominated for Academy Awards for the four acting categories, an uncomfortably high number have played a servitude role, such as a maid or slave, or a racially typecasted one, such as a drug addict, unhomed or abusive person. Representation in media matters because being represented in diverse careers matters.



The second indicator of the permeating effect of America's exploitation of the Black working class is corporate curation—or industries' ability to carefully generate an image that hides their racist standards, practices or roots. Essentially, when white leadership feigns proximity to the Black working class.

Corporate curation is, in the face of systemic inequality in the workforce, a persistent lack of anti-racist action paired with virtue signaling through a #BLM post or Starbucks' infamous "let's talk about race" campaign. Color of Change President Rashad Robinson finds this superficial, saying that he has "seen an outpouring of companies saying Black lives matter... but want[s] them to actually make Black lives matter through their policies and their practices." Performative actions allow white leadership to tokenize Black employees without committing to their protection, betterment or equitable treatment in the workplace. This is feigning both proximity and solidarity.

Pursuit of happiness is not possible in the face of generational wealth, impenetrable glass ceilings and a lineage of exploitation. When we come to this place—where we've developed into a socioeconomic state irrevocably contingent upon the subordination and exploitation of Black people—grasping for solutions might seem like grasping at straws.

Yet, there are conscious and concrete things we can do as workers to not only try correcting years of this injustice, but enact more progressive, protective labor policy for all. Restorative justice looks like reparations and tax breaks for the Black American working class, and social programs with improved funding to centers combating systemic racism—such as school districts and public housing. Most clearly and most promising, however, is the idea of "centering."

Distinguished University Professor of English Mary Helen Washington began her tenure as the president of the American Studies Association in the late 1990s with a speech titled "Disturbing the Peace: What Happens to American Studies If You Put African American Studies at the Center?" American Studies, at this point, was regarded as a field focused on the identity of the American empire. Washington implored the discipline to adopt, as she says, "institutional and structural ways to reconstruct American Studies" around African American thought and experiences. Centering, in this case, looked like incentivizing the mainstream to recognize and promote Black scholars.

Looking back at her speech 23 years later, Washington says that "it was an easier kind of change," noting the field of American Studies had a "deep incentive for change...it wasn't just good intentions—they needed African American Studies in order for the American Studies Association to grow." Mutually beneficial systems like this—an institution that needs the prestige of Black voices collaborating with Black voices in need of platforms—is one way centering can occur.

African American Studies was, according to Washington, "beginning to become a presence on college campuses" and higher education institutions were increasingly incentivized by the growing popularity of the field. At the same time, Black scholars frequently felt "increasingly marginalized by other scholarly associations," according to Washington, "but saw a place where they could be the 'main actors' in American Studies." And so, mutually assured success was born through operationalized incentives.

More Black scholars joined American Studies, and became central players in offices. They got published, gained prestige and were able to network interdisciplinary and cross culturally. "We were beginning to see Ethnic Studies, Chicano, Asian American Studies," said Washington, "and African American Studies was the catalyst." The centering of Black experiences transformed a field into an interdisciplinary, inclusive and multicultural space. She finds this analogous to the Black Lives Matter movement

today, where protestors are giving people an incentive to change the police department. "An aspect of change," Washington says "is the study of institutions that make them work...Someone has been studying police departments and criminal justice—unpacking the militarization of police ... until you study you don't even know what's wrong with it." Policy and law created privileges—centering the subordinated challenges them.

What Washington did with the field of African American Studies, we must do with the Black working class. Particularly, Washington prescribed college campuses as a catalyst, noting that the "object of change now [are] universities." Progress in America's working class can stem from the protests for justice and equity happening on college campuses, where there are similar fights for the centering of Black experiences.

"You can't get institutions to change unless you incentivize the change," she says, "they need to have the fire underneath them, they can't start the fire themselves." Students need to demand change and decentralize whiteness in academics because, as Washington believes, campuses and curriculum are one important site for interrogating policies that affect tomorrow's workplaces. Change on college campuses can provide the insight into centralizing the Black working class in the workplace.

When corporations—especially universities—fund mentorship programs, integrate anti-racist teachings and focus on equity and justice—not just diversity and inclusion—they have centered labor reform on the Black working class and gained talented Black leaders on their teams. This options nadir as a launch point, arguing that a shift toward consciousness of modern Black labor experiences can end exploitation and, perhaps, ignite the legal passage of progressive labor policy. Americans can have better wages, fuller careers and health care unattached to employment by centering the labor movement in Black experiences, the bearers of a history of subordination and exploitation in the workplace.

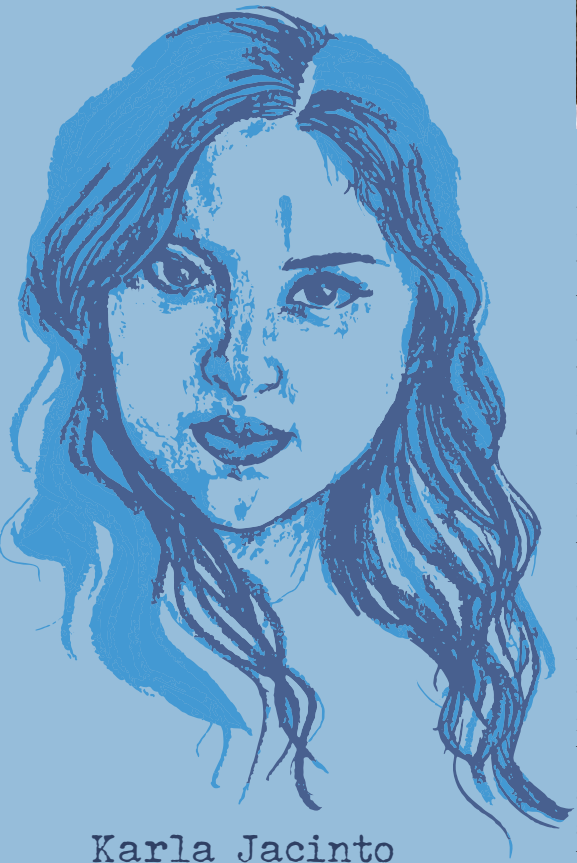
What is particularly helpful about centering Black experiences in labor movements is that we get news stories about the Black cooks, caregivers, curators and carpenters who voted blue and not just the "economically anxious" white coal miners who voted red. People of color will be the majority of the working class by 2032, as according to the Economic Policy Institute, yet they do not appear to be the majority of our media coverage regarding the working class.

The representation of "Amos 'n' Andy" mattered a great deal in how we understood the Black working class, and news coverage does too. Incentivizing institutions—corporations, universities and media outlets—to honor Black minds, and not exploit them, requires a societal shift away from the horrific history America so regularly tends to fall into. Centering doesn't exclude, just reorients. When we say "Black Lives Matter", we must look at the lives of the Black working class.





# The Pandemic in the Shadows



Karla Jacinto



Gabby Chiodo

She/Her

First-Year

Political Science

**CONTENT WARNING:** Sex Trafficking

On January 31, 1865, slavery within the United States was largely abolished under the Emancipation Proclamation. Thousands of Black men, women and children were freed and, slowly, the process of them being fully accepted and integrated into society began. However, according to an article published by Business

Insider, there are still hundreds of thousands of people shackled by the chains of modern slavery.

Human trafficking has been called “modern slavery” by former President Barack Obama. This hideous industry is defined as the use of force, fraud or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. This definition comes from The Department of Homeland Security, but it should be noted that under the umbrella of human trafficking is sex trafficking, where children, usually young girls, are forced to perform sexual acts through coercion or other methods.

The industry of human trafficking produces a disgusting amount of profit each year. As of 2014, according to the International Labour Organization, human trafficking made a profit of roughly \$150 billion. The largest profits come from sexual exploitation, accounting for \$99 billion of the total profit estimate. Yet, approximately 19% of victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Globally, nearly 64% of human trafficking victims are being forced into labor in several different industries, including manufacturing, mining, agriculture, construction and domestic work.

Not only are young girls often made targets for the sex trafficking industry, but overall female trafficking

victims vastly outnumber those of male victims according to Human Rights First. This is not said to discount the males of this gross violation of human rights, rather, these statistics can offer proper insight into what communities are being targeted. It is mostly considered a gender issue in the United States due to this large disparity between male and female victims, but there is also another discriminatory issue at play here; human trafficking is a systematically racist crime ring.

While gender is one extreme disparity between victims in the world of human trafficking, many other factors, such as race or socioeconomic background, seem to play into the likelihood of a minor being trafficked. According to an article in the Topical Research Digest, trafficked persons are of lower socioeconomic status, have fewer prospects for their future and a lower rate of literacy. This leads a person to look for work outside of the area they reside in, including through in-state migration or immigration.

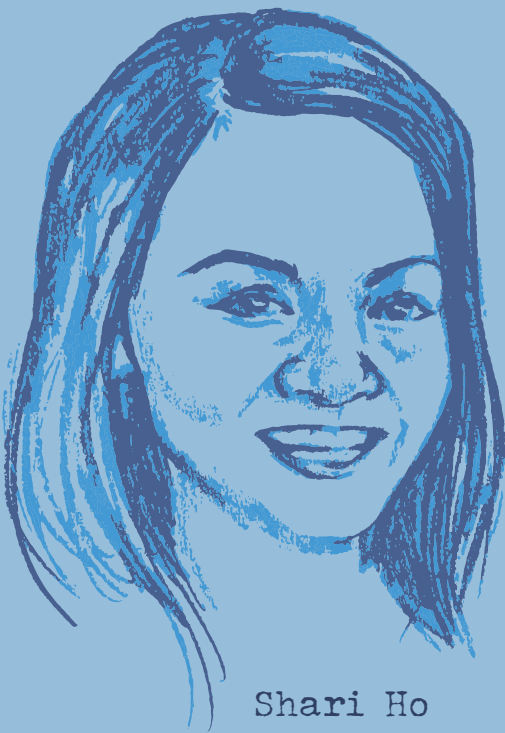
There are many other scenarios that lead to a minor being trafficked. These range from parents selling their children, kidnapping or debt bondage. The one common thread among all these scenarios, according to the Topical Digest article,

is a desire for economic prosperity. Thus, the more impoverished a family, community or country, the danger of human trafficking increases.

While implications of racial discrimination have been long debated, a common agreement social scientists have reached is that



Holly Austin Smith



Shari Ho

thread among all these scenarios, according to the Topical Digest article, is a desire for economic prosperity. Thus, the more impoverished a family, community or country, the danger of human trafficking increases.

While implications of racial discrimination have been long debated, a common agreement social scientists have reached is that minorities face marginalization, and this marginalization frequently results in poverty. The Polaris Project, an organization that seeks to

combat human trafficking, states that the majority of trafficked victims come from minority or marginalized groups. Applying this definition to the social structure within the United States, people of color, undocumented immigrants, at-risk youth and, as previously discussed, those of lower socioeconomic statuses are more likely to be victims of human trafficking. Thus, it should not be looked at under only terms of criminalization, but also an economic and public health issue. Minorities in countries, even the United States, are suffering—at a greater frequency than the majority—from human trafficking and forced labor.

The lack of research that has been done on the tie between race and human trafficking is a failure in part by the United States government. Human trafficking in the United States only became illegal in 2000 and it still only criminalizes sex work, labeling many sex workers as criminals rather than victims of trafficking. Additionally, in 2018 the United States was ranked one of the world's worst places for human trafficking according to Buisness Insider. While many United States government officials demonize human trafficking, little has been done to destroy the industry, and even less has been done to keep minorities and marginalized groups protected.

However, a direct link between race and human trafficking can be seen, especially in the United States when analyzing the small amount of data that has been collected. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, over half of all juvenile prostitution arrests are Black children. They also found that in Los Angeles County, 92% of trafficking victims were Black. Native American children are also being targeted at a significant rate and these cases often receive

little to no media attention.

Lacking media attention given to cases of Native American children being trafficked is due to many factors. The first can be traced to the roots of the United States itself. According to the American Indian Law Review, Native Americans were forced off their land when European colonizers came to America, and distrust of the federal justice system was created. Because of this, many Native American trafficking victims are hesitant to speak out.

Additionally, modern media treats human trafficking as a crime story rather than a human rights issue. Researchers Anne M. Johnston and Barbara Friedman monitored the media and found that 54% of human trafficking coverage was treated as a law and order issue, not a systemic problem. Because of this, many human trafficking victims, especially Black and Indigenous people of color, feel as though they will be sent to jail if they come forward about the crimes of which they are victims.

America must do better. American lawmakers must do better. American human rights activists must do better. The United States is said to be one of the greatest countries in the world, but cities such as Washington, Atlanta, Orlando and many more are hubs for human trafficking. Children are being forced into labor and sex work either by kidnapping, debt bondage or other scenarios.

Solving the problem of modern-day slavery is not a partisan issue. It will take everyone, on all sides of the aisles, to fix the cause of human trafficking. The wealth disparity that plagues America will only worsen if nothing is done because we've seen that as poverty increases, so does human trafficking. America cannot be called the land of the free until every single child, no matter what socioeconomic status or race, can be freed from the vile ring of human trafficking.



Chelsea Buckley



# Restoring Agency:

How Reclaiming White-Washed Narratives Can Help Our Democracy



**Lauren Hamby**

She/Her  
Junior  
History

“Tales of Famous Americans” by Connie and Peter Roop introduced me to what I now remember as my first example of Black exceptionalism and agency even though I certainly was not aware of it at the time. In this book geared toward second and third graders, the Roops show young readers a variety of famous Americans. Some featured figures include George Washington, Martin Luther King Jr., Helen Keller, and Yo-Yo Ma. However, one that stood out to me was Madam C.J. Walker. A self-made millionaire through her line of hair products, Walker piqued my interest because of how unfamiliar I was with her story. I waited to learn more about her in my social studies classes, but, throughout my elementary, middle and high school years, that day never came.

Unfortunately, this series of events is a common phenomenon in history classrooms across the United States. Often as the result of Eurocentric state standards that hope to promote the idea of America first, textbooks and class discussions give little mention to the stories beyond the oppression of traditionally marginalized groups. Students learn about slavery but not the lives of slaves, Indigenous existence but not specific tribes and their cultures. Little mention is given to any person, celebration or tradition that does not directly impact white people.

The single set of stories that are largely taught in the U.S. public school system are not providing these groups with a sense of agency or identity beyond their oppression. Instead, it is creating generations of Americans who do not know an honest history of our nation. To better understand the issues this creates, we must first examine the current situation, then evaluate this situation and finally explore some potential solutions to make our history programs more honest.

When looking at the numbers, the way that public K-12 schools teach Black and Indigenous history leaves a lot to be imagined. A study conducted

by the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in 2015 found that, while teachers generally consider Black history to be significant in understanding U.S. history, only one or two class periods—or eight to nine percent of total class time—is devoted to these lessons.

Even when Black history is taught, it often only focuses on a few key events. As the NMAAHC study continues, the most taught portions of this history are the slave trade, Brown v. Board of Education, the impact of the Civil Rights Act and the Obama election. This issue surrounding representation is only heightened when looking at Black women in this context.

A study published in the Social Studies Journal in 2012 notes that this group makes up less than 15% of the images in the Black history portion of textbooks. Although teachers are interested in making Black history more pertinent in their American history courses, according to the aforementioned NMAAHC study, there is still a disconnect between what is being taught and the agency at play. While it is absolutely important that students learn about these events in our nation’s history, teaching only of oppression is the bare minimum. We need classrooms that educate about and honor the wider Black experience.

This problem is not limited to Black history. When examining Indigenous histories and cultures in America, a 2015 Pennsylvania State University study found that, in a K-12 public school setting, 87% of content taught about these groups centers on a pre-1900s context. Additionally, 27 states did not mention a single individual Indigenous person in their state standards. The aforementioned studies don’t even consider other marginalized groups that live in the United States, such as the queer community. For these groups, it is difficult to even imagine how little representation they are given. Clearly this is an issue in

the way that history is taught in public K-12 schools.

This is an issue because it does not provide an honest representation of United States history, and this hurts students, especially those that are people of color. In fact, a Stanford University study from 2016 looked at data from a pilot program in San Francisco where students considered at high risk for dropping out were enrolled in one of the state's ethnic studies programs. The results were surprising—attendance rose by 21 percentage points, while grade-point averages rose by 1.4 points. The study observed the largest improvements in test scores among boys and Hispanic students in math and science. From this research, it seems as though taking courses in ethnic studies, or examining a version of history where the narrative is not centered around the actions of white people, can help students feel a sense of agency in many parts of their lives. This can drive them to succeed across their lives.

Beyond this, eliminating our whitewashed historical narratives can help our democracy by eliciting a sense of agency in historically marginalized groups. Having an honest understanding of our nation's history is empowering and gives all members of our society the toolkit that they need to succeed.

To begin to see how this is true, we need to understand what an honest history is. This term can be used to describe a way of teaching that does not focus on the Eurocentric features. In a traditional history class setting, one set narrative is generally taught: that of the white man. However, this eradicates some key principles behind history, namely the idea that it is fluid. The way that the past is studied can change based on any number of factors including the historian's own perspective, views on the culture or time period.

Systemically, our society can begin to explore teaching an honest history through mandating that state standards include a diverse curriculum. This can be done by telling the stories of Black and Indigenous people of color in ways that promote their agency instead of reinforcing oppression-centered narratives. Classroom curriculum needs to be changed to tell individual stories that defy the outdated ones that are commonly taught. Although these changes can be done at a classroom level—like posters of powerful people of color throughout U.S. history—it is absolutely imperative that state and national standards begin to prioritize teaching an honest history.

Reimagining the way in which history is currently taught is a big change, though. This process

would realistically take many years to complete. Until then, the most important thing that we can do is re-educate ourselves and others. This can be as simple as reading a book, fiction or nonfiction, with a Black or Indigenous person of color as the main character, sharing their story. It can look like taking time to reflect on the education that you have been given and recognizing where it has flaws. And it could even be as easy as buying a copy of a book that inspires Black exceptionalism—like the Roop's "Tales of Famous Americans"—for a young person in your life.



# HOBBY HEALTH: CARING FOR YOURSELF IN A PANDEMIC

Over the last six months, what new hobbies did you take up? TikTok, painting, cooking, working out or a sport? How was your mental health? Were you usually sad, happy, hopeless? Whatever the emotions that you might have felt during one of the most unnatural and unexpected times, were valid.

With the increase in isolation, separation from loved ones and not being able to leave our houses, we have all faced instances of stress, depression and frustration. Mental health, a generally stigmatized topic, has been an area of concern for these past couple months. COVID-19, the virus that caused this current pandemic, has taken a mental toll on almost every single person in the world.

This virus has caused a multitude of issues ranging from economic to relationship problems. These issues have not only taken a social toll, but also a mental toll on the population. In an article published by Forbes, statistics indicate that as of May 2020, “text messages to a federal disaster distress hotline increased more than 1000% last month.” This is about 19,000 more texts than that of April 2019.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Centers for Disease Control (CDC), has found that major traumatic events can cause prolonged psychological consequences. This is consistent with emotional aftermath of national tragedies, such as Hurricane Katrina, where the extensive effects of an intense event pair with other factors, such as social isolation in the case of COVID-19.

Social isolation is one of the biggest outcomes of this current pandemic. We are forced into confinement in our homes, without being able to see our families and friends. Without distractions, it is extremely difficult to keep the mind from wandering into a dark place. Work has become remote, school has turned into Zoom University and access to the social lifestyle that was once normal seems almost impossible now. We are clueless as to what the future



**Pranjali Rajalakshmi**

She/Her  
Senior  
Psychology

entails.

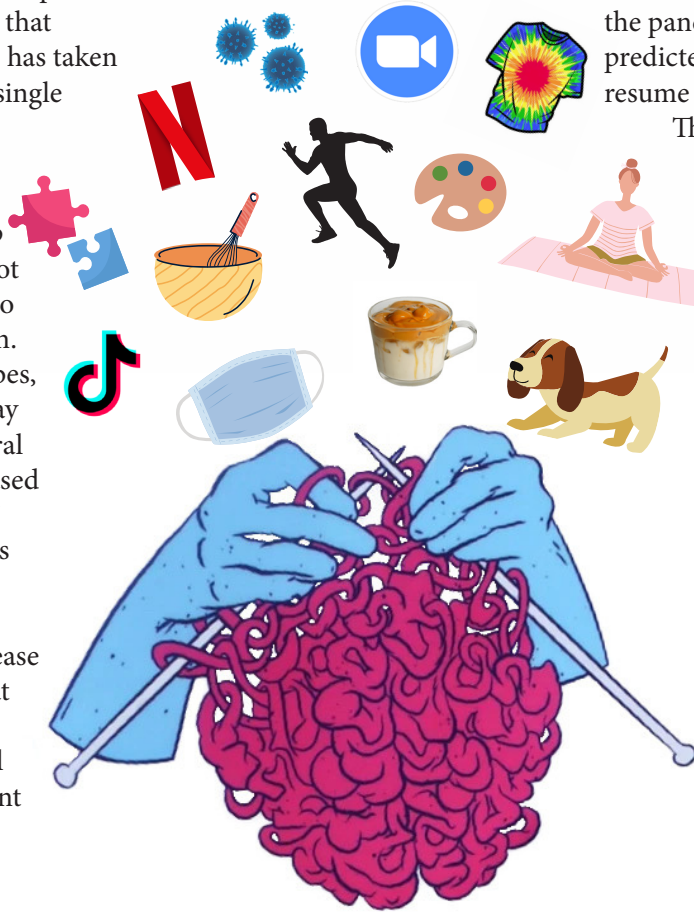
All of these situations play an impactful role in creating the “perfect storm” for poor mental health. We wonder: will there be a vaccine? Will the pandemic get worse come winter as predicted? Or will we finally be able to resume our previous carefree lifestyles?

These questions that we all have lingering in the back of our minds have also had an impact on the way we think. Our mindset has changed and some of us might have become more realistic while others have become more hopeless. Either way, we have all tried to find answers to the questions about our uncertain future, while aiming for distractions to ease our minds.

In a survey that I conducted on fellow Saint Louis University students, an individual stated that they started jump roping as a distraction while another said they started sewing, and another, investing in stocks. Things we never had time for in the past became our new best friends.

While we might have picked up these distractions, one thing is for sure: they did not come easy. There were days we might have felt so down we couldn't even get out of bed, or days where everything was a blur and felt like déjà vu, again and again and again.

College students, teens and underprivileged groups are some of the most impacted individuals in terms of mental health during these trying times. A survey conducted by the CDC found that 75% of respondents aged 18 to 24 reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral



health symptom, while serious suicidal ideation among this group was 25%.

Furthermore, “More than 20% of essential workers reported suicidal thoughts.” This was not just in relation to nurses and doctors, but also grocery clerks, custodial staff and factory workers. Those that do not have easy access to resources have been struggling and experiencing financial troubles. The general student population has been stuck at home and those who are less privileged might struggle with access to the internet to do assignments, access to food that they were once able to get in the cafeteria or finding a place to just get away from home. These extraneous changes are all aspects that affect mental health.

These statistics show that while many of us might not talk about the mental struggles that we are going through, they are still happening. I, myself, have struggled with my mental health these past couple months. After finding out that classes were going to be completely online, I felt clueless and lost. I lost my motivation to do anything and doing homework assignments and studying for exams was a mission in itself. I felt as though I had no future. I would find myself lying in bed all day long watching TikToks on my phone, only leaving to eat or shower. My sleep schedule consisted of going to bed at five in the morning and waking up at two in the afternoon every single day. I would also only eat 1.5 meals a day. There would be days where I would sit in my room and cry, but would have no idea where the emotions were coming from. I didn’t tell anyone about what I was going through, however, looking back on it now, I wish I had.

Sometime in the middle of June, I realized that what I was doing would not get me anywhere and that I had to change my lifestyle. I made myself a schedule, started working again and started to focus on myself. I started working out, drinking more water, eating more—and healthier—and trying to do things that made me happy. Gratitude journals and painting became my best friends. I slowly started to see my happiness come back and I felt myself starting to learn to love myself in the process. I wouldn’t say that this was easy but I have learned a lot about myself and what is best for me.

This is only my story. We all experience mental health differently and the way we deal with it varies with what we experience in our daily lives. However, there are some pieces of advice to keep in mind as they can relate to everyone. In the survey that I conducted, one student said that everything takes time, and even if you—as an individual—feel as though you see no improvements, just know that things will change over time. Another perspective on mental health came from a student who said that no matter how bad the situation or how far away your goals are, focus on what you can control and keep a positive mindset and the rest will fall into place. These pieces of advice may not relate to what every single one of us is going

through, but they relay that while battles may be different, we are all in this together.

While it is easier said than done, the question still remains, where do we go from here? We have been in a pandemic for seven months now and our perspectives have changed completely. However, we can still take steps to improve our mental health. For one, start doing things that make you happy—whether that is spending time with the people who make you a better person or a hobby that gives you a peace of mind. Moreover, get enough sleep and take care of your body! This is one of the most important things we can do to protect ourselves and improve our health during a pandemic. With the stress of classes and life, we tend to forget to take care of ourselves. Focus on positive thoughts and every time you feel yourself thinking negatively, try to find the good in the bad.

COVID-19 has changed us, improved us and affected us to a point where if we were to go back to March, we probably would not know our old selves. We cannot deny that mental health has become a major issue in this generation but with the right steps and the right self care, we can make our lives a little bit easier to handle. There are also good things that come out of something bad. For example, maybe you got a new four-legged friend or you realized who your true friends are or maybe you learned how to adjust to situations out of your control. Regardless of what it was, you did that and you are still here. We are all in this together.





# WHITE WASHED HINDUISM



## A GUIDE TO APPRECIATION, NOT APPROPRIATION OF OTHER CULTURES



**Anagha Arla**

She/Her

First-Year  
Psychology

Let's be real, 2020 was not what we expected it to be. Things were difficult; as a South Asian, I grew up leading two lives, one at home and the other at school, and both were forced together when classes started online. Unfortunately, this is a common experience for many immigrant children, and worsened by online school and even our social media refuge. In fact, while everyone rightfully searched for peace of mind during quarantine, many immigrant children experienced the appropriation of Hinduism on their feeds. This "whitewashed Hinduism" caught my attention, specifically when a TikTok trend of "manifestation" popped up.

According to Oxford Languages, manifestation is an event, action or object that clearly shows or embodies something, especially a theory or an abstract idea. Manifestation has many meanings to every one of us. To some, it's a way to lead life while to others, it's something not worth their time. Manifestation has come into the spotlight recently, when the popular app TikTok started a trend where individuals "manifested" using the three-six-nine method, in which you write down, or simply set your mind and focus on what you want to happen three times in the morning, six times in the afternoon, and nine times at night. The goal is to train your mind to focus on positive events, to "manifest" it until it comes true.

Although manifestation might be gaining attention right now, it has long grown roots, especially in the Hindu Culture. Hinduism, aka Sanatana Dharma meaning "Eternal Spiritual Path," has roots beginning around 4000 years ago by the Aryans, according to the United Religions Initiative. The Aryans created the Vedas—sacred texts that contained their philosophy, customs and religion.

Essentially, Hindus believe that a human being's basic nature is confined in their soul. This means that in Hindu culture, every action that you take is a reflective measure of your soul: the spirit in you. The soul in your body is your spirit and has been

with you in all of your previous lives (yes, Hindus believe in reincarnation). This spirit is one with god, which essentially means that the purer your soul is, the closer you are to god.

So how does this relate? Well a pillar of one of the world's oldest and largest religions had become distorted for a TikTok trend.

Let's be clear here: Hinduism is not yours to cherry pick. Hinduism accepts all people but does not allow you to appropriate elements for fashion or trend—especially while Hindus across America are bullied and stereotyped for their beliefs. My bindi is part of my identity—it doesn't define me but contributes to who I am. That's why it's not your Coachella trend, and why we must examine how non-Hindus can learn more about this magnificent religion without appropriating or offending its followers.

Let's dive deep into the issue of Yoga. In Hinduism, Yoga is often used as a measure to connect your soul with your body. If you are thinking about Namaskar, yes—Hindus bow their head and press their palms together to respect the spirit in the other individual, and vice versa. One of the earliest mentions of Yoga is the sacred book called the Bhagavad Gita:

tatraikāgraṁ manaḥ kṛtvā yata-chittendriya-kriyāḥ  
upaviśhyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātma-viśuddhaye  
samaṁ kāya-śiro-grīvaṁ dhārayann achalaṁ sthiraḥ  
samprekṣhya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ dīkṣaśh chānavalokayan  
– Bhagavad Gita 6.12 – 13

There, having the mind actively focused upon a single point,  
with thought and sense activity controlled,  
Sitting on a seat, one should practice yoga for  
purification of the self.

With an aligned body, head, and neck – keeping these  
steady, without movement;

Focusing the vision toward the tip of one's nose  
without looking about in any direction.

Essentially, the Bhagavad Gita tells us that Yoga is used to purify our souls. One of the ancient types of Yoga is called the Surya Namaskar, meaning Sun Salutations. The Surya Namaskars consist of 12 steps, or Asanas, that help rejuvenate your body, mind and soul. Many scholars record that these Asanas go all the way back to the ninth century in India. Yoga wasn't introduced to America until the late 1800s when Swami Vivekananda made a presentation in Chicago in front of the World Parliament of Religions about body, mind and spirit. I swear, there was no Lululemon in sight.

But more than just Yoga, white-washed Hinduism is present in everyday lives of Hindus. In fact, let's look at pop culture. One of the earliest movies I ever watched as a Disney fanatic that showcased an actual Indian character was "Lemonade Mouth." Yes, I'm talking about Mohini (Mo) played by Naomi Scott—who is actually of half British and half Ugandan-Gujarati-Indian descent. In that film, all brown girls felt connected by the way Mohini would often change her outfits in the restroom before starting school, the academic pressures of being Indian and, of course, having a secret boyfriend. Essentially, by sprinkling Hinduism in without actually honoring its culture, Disney presented a romanticized and glorified version of Hindus that society was more likely to accept.

In addition, the company's show "Jessie" stars Karan Brar who plays Ravi. Brar is known for his famous stereotypical Indian accent. Brar has been public with the fact that he actually had to practice that accent, as he truly didn't have one. Once again, the media that was popular when we were children shows us that if you were Hindu, or Indian, you had to be of two stereotypes: one where you were regarded as a "fresh off the boat," and the other where you were so Americanized that you changed your entire personality to fit in at school. There was never a healthy place where you could learn about your culture—especially from the roots—instead of being influenced by the white-washed views of what Hinduism is. Fun fact, India has its own versions of "Jessie" and "The Suite Life of Zack and Cody," titled "Oye Jassie" and "The Suite Life of Karan of Kabir."

Throwing this different media in front of children, who are already experiencing the difficult, two-faced life of being an immigrant child, truly creates trauma. On one side, the children are simply trying to gain a sense of community at school by trying their hardest to fit in. This can include accepting the whitewashed pronunciation of your Indian names just to reduce the amount of attention people might pay you. Simply, just trying to fit in that box of "normal."

This is a common experience for many Desi children. In fact, Saint Louis University's very own Hindu Student Community President, Nirali Thakkar, shared her experience about a time in which she corrected a teacher on the pronunciation of a geographical monument in India only to be shut down and rudely told, "This is how we are going to pronounce it in this class." At the same time, these students are going home to be the picture perfect Indian child, the one their parents brag about to other aunties and uncles. Somewhere in perfecting both sides of this act, these children lose their own identity, often facing a crisis in their adolescent years.

The next question that should be racing through your mind is, how do we fix that? How do we fix that identity crisis you might be struggling with right now, or have seen someone else struggle with?

From personal experience, if there is one thing to be kept in mind, it's to simply be patient with yourself. After growing up in such a different world than our parents, and consistently trying to fit in, unlearning that trauma takes years at a time. Learning healthy ways to deal with that trauma also takes time. It is so important to remember that you are just a human being, and you are allowed time to heal, to take time to reflect and understand where you want to be in Hindu culture.

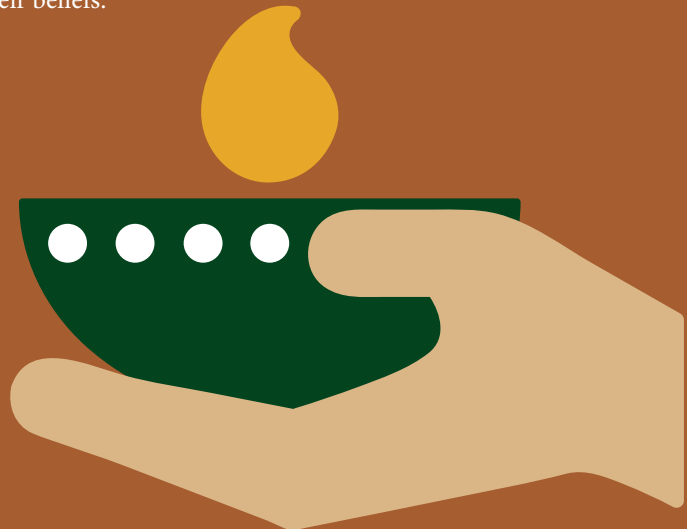
It's hard being the product of two communities. Often we're seen as "too Indian" or "too white." That is merely a social construct and does not define your worth nor who you are. You are the only person who gets to decide what you believe in. Remember to keep an open mind, and recognize that what works for you may not work for others. Hinduism means something different to everyone, and you are allowed to make your own definition of it as long as you don't misrepresent the religion.

For someone like me who wants to incorporate Hindu culture into their everyday life—because it brings them a sense of purpose and peace—there are many ways to do it! In fact there are many ways to incorporate Hinduism in your life respectfully and without necessarily whitewashing it.

I personally channel my energy into my fashion to show that I am a product of two communities and cultures. I will often wear fancy earrings (Jumkas) and jewelry with a crop top and some ripped jeans to embellish my Desi roots, but also to find comfort in my westernized upbringing. This mixture also presents itself in my music taste where I listen to Hindi music that is mashed with pop songs. Some of the artists that create this type of music include Vidya Vox, Arjun and many more. These are just two ways I incorporate both parts of myself. You will find what is right for you, but you first have to seek out what is right for you. We are all different individuals and see things in different lights.

This life is yours, and you are allowed to do as you please with it. You do not have to submit yourself to white supremacy. You have every right to be proud of who you are! If you aren't a part of it, do not be afraid to learn about Hinduism—or other cultures that are different from yours—but remember, there is a line between appreciating and appropriating.

Quarantine has given us all time to think, reflect and, hopefully, have a mini glow-up. Make sure your glow-up isn't just physical but also mental, spiritual and respectful of all people and their beliefs.





# MORE THAN THE fighting for a country



**Kruti Kadiwala**

She/Her

Junior

Health Management and  
Public Health

“I’m proud to be an American where at least I know I’m free/And I won’t forget the men who died who gave that right to me.”

These lyrics from “God Bless the U.S.A.” exemplify American patriotism. They connect the people to feelings of love for their country, take pride in its accomplishments and create an emotional attachment to its symbols.

Patriotic messages such as these lyrics have created a culture of responsibility to fight for and serve the U.S. It has made Americans feel safe and comforted because they believe that if they are loyal to their country, then their country will fight for them. But the reality is quite the opposite. Black and female veterans, as well as those seeking homes and health care, face distinct challenges and governmental abandon when they return from the field. America is constantly failing the veterans it vows to honor and neglecting “American heroes” it promised to never forget.

Every September 11, Americans remember the tragic attack on the U.S. and thank the first responders that risked their lives to save their fellow citizens. Hashtags that say “Never Forget” accompanied by photos of the World Trade Center (WTC) flood social media without understanding that the first responders who were at Ground Zero are now fighting for their health care.

First responders spent months on the piles of the WTC, removing debris and exposing themselves to toxins and smoke. An article published in *The Lancet* revealed that “WTC-exposed firefighters had about 10% higher overall cancer incidence ratios than those expected in a similar demographic mix from the general male population in the USA and about 32% higher than in non-exposed firefighters.” The same study also reported that many disorders associated with chronic inflammation including bronchitis, asthma, sinusitis and acid reflux were highly prevalent after WTC exposure. These inflammation conditions can lead to cancer in the future.

Further, a study published in the *Journal of American Medicine* found a significant association between greater WTC exposure and long-term cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk. According to data collected by the World Trade Center Health Program, almost 900 first responders have already died from cancer and almost 1000 have died from aerodigestive conditions.

Congress initially created the September 11th Victim

Compensation Fund to support affected first responder families, but it has come under fire recently because the fund was quickly drained and would not have been able to sustain all of its expected and future claims. Additionally, a Vox article on this fund explained that Congress had moved to stop accepting applicants for the program by December 2020 and also revealed “the number of deaths from 9/11 diseases will outnumber the almost 3,000 people who died on September 11, 2001.”

A New York Times article on firefighter advocacy explains that more than 800 insurance awards have been reduced and future payments would have to be decreased by as much as 70% in 2019. The article quotes Jon Stewart, a consistent advocate for 9/11 first responders, saying that, “As I sit here today, I can’t help but think what an incredible metaphor this room is for the entire process that getting health care and benefits for 9/11 first responders has come to...Behind me, a filled room of 9/11 first responders, and in front of me, a nearly empty Congress.” After almost a decade of fighting for health care access, the Never Forget the Heroes Act was passed in 2019 and extended the Victim Compensation Fund through 2090.

But this shortcoming is not an isolated incident; it is part of a history. This pattern of the U.S. not fighting for “American heroes” was a common experience for Black soldiers during the Vietnam War. Similar to Black soldiers during World War II, Black men sought a road to equality during the Vietnam War era, and the government promised a better life in the postwar world. A study in *The Gerontologist* on three generations of Black veterans labeled the duality of the Black soldier as a “double consciousness.” It explains, “African American soldiers talked about the Double Victory campaign: fighting on two fronts against two enemies—racism at home and in the service, and the opponent in war.”

The article also noted experiences of overt racism. One example was about how segregation affected training. A former soldier explains, “We were in Philadelphia ready to have lunch. The white soldiers walked in the restaurant; [B]lack soldiers weren’t allowed in. They handed us our boxed lunch outside.” The U.S. built memorials for these soldiers and has called them heroes, but never mentions the racism they faced while they were in service and the segregated country they came back to.

Moreover, because the U.S.’s involvement in the Vietnam War was controversial, the study found many former soldiers





# BATTLEFRONT

## that does not fight for you

described feeling dishonored as a Black person and a soldier for over six decades. Another former soldier discussed how “African American soldiers and citizens had been forgotten.” Black soldiers joined the military for access to greater education and respect for their country, but they received little to no societal recognition during their time in service and for years after, during their time in service and for years after.

These wars put service members at risk for severe damage, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). An article in the *Best Practices in Mental Health* journal reveals that studies have documented PTSD in nearly 45% of military personnel, but only 23% to 40% seek treatment. A study in the *American Journal of Psychotherapies* explains that “conceptualizations of PTSD failed to capture the complexity of moral injury arising from significant feelings of guilt and shame caused by reappraisals of actions (or lack thereof) during the initial trauma, and are manifested as intrusive, negative, and ruminative cognitions.” Essentially, these morally injurious events place veterans at greater risk for many poor mental health outcomes, which may be mediated by post-traumatic stress conditions.

A study published in *Advances in Nursing Science* explains that female veterans tend to have a lifetime depression rate, nearly two times the rate of their male counterparts, and finds that “mental health care for women veterans is a critical unmet need that must be met.” Further, these traumatic events are associated with higher levels of unemployment; the same study finds that, in 2015, 11.2% of female veteran subjects were unemployed, compared to 9.4% for males.

Moreover, female veterans are also in greater danger because of the history of sexual assault against women in the military. According to a report published by the Department of Defense (DoD), the rate of sexual assault and rape increased by almost 40% from 2016 to 2018, and for women veterans, the rate increased by over 50% to the highest level since 2006. It also predicted that nearly 80% of cases go unreported over fear of being discharged. As military service members dedicate themselves to their country, their country is unphased by their mental health status and lack of physical protection. Experiences of war-related trauma, PTSD and military sexual trauma (MST) can leave service members unprepared and unequipped to readjust to civilian life.

An article in the *Preventing Chronic Disease* journal reveals that “veteran status was associated with more than a 2-fold increase for men and a 3-fold increase for women in the odds of becoming homeless.” This article also points out that from the study’s youngest age cohort

50% of Black male veterans and more than 30% of Black female veterans were experiencing homelessness—compared with only 7% for non-Black males and 12% for non-Black females. This disproportion is consistent among most other age groups. Further, as cases of MST have increased, the same DoD report found that veterans with an MST history are over twice as likely to experience homelessness, which is associated with chronic conditions that require treatment. However, these populations tend to have less access to health care even though they have higher needs.

But the biggest victims of war are often the people whose homeland America invades. The U.S. sent soldiers to Iraq post-9/11, which has been deemed as unnecessary and unjust by many experts on war. A case study done in *Commonweal* on the Iraq war explains, “The United States had neither justifiable cause nor right intention in invading Iraq—neither as a response to 9/11, for which Iraq was not responsible, nor as a preemptive strike against an eminent threat, which Iraq did not pose.”

Since 2003, this invasion has killed approximately 200,000 Iraqi civilians, according to Iraq Body Count, and 5,000 American soldiers, as reported by the *Commonweal* study. Yet, there were no weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq—no reason to invade—and the U.S. did not declare an end to the occupation until after nearly a decade.

The U.S. praises its military for securing its basic rights of freedom while the “American Heroes” take the lives of innocent civilians. Long, unnecessary wars, such as the one in Iraq, call into question whether the utilization of the military is to protect American citizens or to assert dominance over other countries. It is possible to support veterans’ health care without supporting the wars they are subjected to.

The notion that the U.S. honors veterans and first responders is an American fallacy and continuing to believe this will keep veterans at risk of PTSD, MST and homelessness, as well as endanger the lives of civilians abroad. The U.S. has the opportunity to fight for its heroes by investing more money in the Veterans Affairs (VA) health system; According to a *Health Affairs* article, half of all VA medical centers operate at a clinical level below the ideal. Additionally, making the military safer for women and preventing MSTs through better reporting and safety nets would represent real support.

Most importantly, the U.S. needs to stop unnecessary warfare. Halting unneeded bloodshed could save service members and countless lives across the world. Honoring “American Heroes” must move beyond salutes and hashtags. Their country should show them the same level of loyalty as they show their service.





# Education: The Great Equalizer



**Tracy George**

She/Her

Junior

Biology

There is a set ideal in America that as long as you work hard, you'll be able to reap all the benefits that are associated with the American Dream: climbing the social ladder, acquiring a steady job and, most importantly, the opportunity for a quality education. The great equalizer in America is education in that it provides the greatest ability for social mobility and accomplishing future goals. Yet, is there truly any assurance that the quality of education existing between schools all around America is at the same standard?

According to Brookings Review author Linda Darling-Hammond, a common pattern in education today is the "significant difference between test scores of African American students and European American students." This gap is existent before children enter kindergarten, all the way to adulthood. There is the false presumption that disparities in the education system do not exist, and that the differences in scores are present between race due to genes, culture or lack of effort. This premise downgrades a significant reality; the determinants of educational success are a direct result of access to resources, support given to teachers and extracurricular enrichment opportunities.

Access to resources, such as technology, proper curriculum and bus routes, are dependent on the funding a school receives, and this is often subject to "the color line." During the Civil Rights era, the color line referred to a social and legal system in which individuals of different races were separated and not given the same rights and opportunities. From public parks, housing, health care and, of course, education, Black Americans were denied equal access to further the notion that even if they were no longer enslaved, they were still controlled. The color line is still existent today, according to a Brookings Review article, in that young Black students are shuffled into impoverished schools that receive little to no funding. Educational inequality did not suddenly disappear from the American school system; as late as the 1960s, most African Americans were educated in fully segregated schools funded at much lower rates and excluded from higher education altogether, according to Carrie Spector of Stanford University.

What exactly is the lack of funding and reform doing to schools and students in impoverished areas? The Economic Policy Institute found that residential segregation is a direct contributor to educational inequality. Within segregated communities, there are often high-income areas with white school districts and a higher local tax revenue. Meanwhile, low-income areas with predominantly Black students receive much less funding because

of their smaller tax distributions.

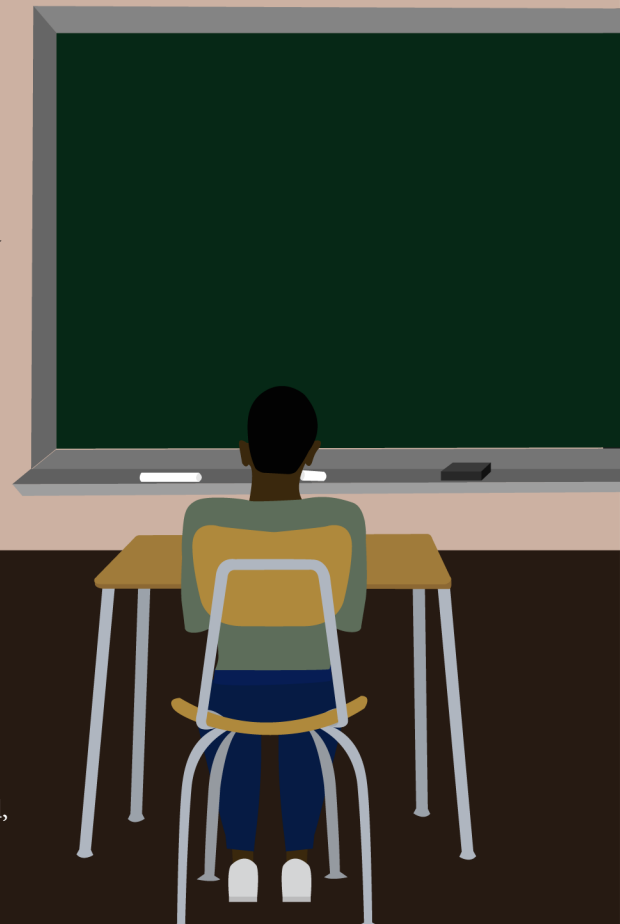
Simply said, less funding results in a significant reduction in classroom materials. According to Liz Hayes, Associate Vice President of Communications at Americans United for Separation of Church and State, teachers in these cases are faced with finding the most efficient way to teach their classrooms of 50 with the materials for 10. Kelsey Pavelka, a Nevada elementary school teacher, explained that she was provided with six laptops—many with broken keys and chargers—to teach a classroom of 42 fifth-graders how to type, in order to prepare them for a state standardized test. She turned to crowdfunding to buy 10 more laptops for her students.

Similarly, Kathryn Vaughn, a Tennessee art teacher, was tasked with providing 800 students art lessons on a total annual supply budget of \$100. "I've had to become incredibly resourceful with the supplies," she told *The New York Times*. Her resourcefulness was showcased in a photo she provided of pickle jars full of used markers soaking in water—her homemade attempt at manufacturing watercolor paints.

When students are not provided with the proper resources, there becomes a gap in learning with only a few students

being able to understand the material fully. If a student does not have access to a computer at home, and the school only has a limited number of computers, the student will find difficulty in completing their assignments, as well as seeking help.

With predominantly minority schools that are filled with mostly Black students, class sizes are typically very large compared to higher-funded, predominantly white schools according to



Darling-Hammond. Curriculum offerings are much lower such that many students do not have the opportunity to take challenging courses that equip them for a college-paced class or even allow them to gain college credit, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses. When preparing for standardized exams that test college readiness, students in underfunded areas often fall short on their scores due to schools not equipping them with the skills necessary to succeed. A Brookings article found that the typical Black American still scores below 75% of American whites on almost every standardized exam.

Underfunding does not only affect the standards inside a classroom, but the ability for students to even get to the classroom. Many students rely on the bus system in order to have an efficient way to get to school and, with low-funded schools, bus systems may need to be cut drastically—offering less routes, travelling shorter distances and forcing more students onto one bus. If transportation is not available to a student that lives outside the radius, attendance will decrease too. Being present in a classroom is essential for proper learning because it keeps students accountable, focused and simply on track. An Edutopia source found that chronic absenteeism diminishes an eagerness to learn, increases isolation and is an indicator of early dropout.

The issue of educational inequality can only be resolved with consistent, increased funding to schools that need it the most. High-income areas are able to see the benefits of increased wealth addition to their school systems from taxes. Shifting tax revenues evenly and increasing them for underfunded schools will shift disparities.

Increasing tax revenues goes hand in hand with increasing affordable housing policies. According to the book “Housing Matters”, with a process known as inclusionary zoning, housing developers are required to set aside a certain share of units for affordable housing for low-income families. Montgomery County in Maryland implemented this system into their local government by setting apart 12 to 15% of units for affordable housing. As

a result, highly affluent areas were able to integrate low-income families. In return, the children of these low-income families were able to gain access to much higher quality education. This plan alone will not solve the problem of educational inequality, but with the increasing funding from tax revenues, inequalities in education can start to be tackled.

A lack of support for teachers is often an indicator of underfunded areas and educational inequality. Teachers are one of the primary ways to fix schools and ensure equality for students, so it is extremely important that funding concentrates on supporting them. Teachers are the heart of the educational system in setting the tone for a classroom, building a welcoming environment, mentoring and motivating students to perform at their best. Paying teachers a comfortable salary and equipping them with more resources is important in closing the gap that exists between educational inequality.

According to a New York Times article, teacher Nicole Amato stated that she had to pay out of pocket for basic classroom materials such as tissues, hand sanitizer and dry erase markers. She was only allowed to make a certain number of photocopies each semester, and each additional copy required her to pay for each sheet. Teachers do not need to take on the burden of providing their students with materials—that should come equipped within schools. Anything else presents a level of disrespect for the professionalism and stability of their career. Education reform can help students beyond their academics. One of those most important aspects of education reform is ensuring there are quality mentoring and counseling programs implemented into schools. With the problem of absences, students will be able to keep their motivation and stay on track with the guidance of mentors. The availability of counseling ensures that students have a solid social and emotional support system with adults who are determined for them to succeed. Education does not need to be strictly defined as academic success, but as the ability for students to immerse themselves in analytical thinking, grow skills and fuel creativity.

Enrichment programs offer students opportunities to get involved outside of the classroom and further their interests with their peers. Educational reform does not need to be limited to inside the classroom, but it is the facilitation of an outlet for students to have positive and productive connections and further explore their abilities.

The great American Dream was founded on the principles of ensuring each citizen freedom, equality and justice. Education fits right into this ideal for individuals to further their knowledge and achieve possibilities in career and personal growth. It is important to examine that if education is considered the key to success, there needs to be assurance that every student in America is offered a quality education that cannot be overlooked due to race, income, location or any other identity.

The Civil Rights Movement created immense change, but schools are still segregated, and Black students are paying the price for this. The capabilities and talents of millions of students in impoverished areas are being passed over due to a faulty system that requires a vast amount of attention. The great equalizer in America is education, and in order to ensure that “all men are created equal,” we need to begin with guaranteeing that all schools are created equal.



# The Healthcare of Tomorrow, *TODAY*

When the pandemic hit our shores, overnight there was a need for physician care involving limited clinical visits and minimal face-to-face interaction. Hospitals became centers for patients diagnosed with COVID-19, making it extremely risky for patients to visit for routine care. Telemedicine, what was thought to be the future in medical technology, suddenly became a necessity, while Direct Primary Care emerged as a vehicle to provide this service, forcing us to rapidly build up the required infrastructure.

Telehealth involves communication between patient and physician, over phone or video call. To meet the needs of telemedicine, physicians were forced to immediately adapt, converting part of their homes into makeshift clinical offices, allowing them to provide patient care from the safety of their own homes. It became the communication of choice and a popular medium for health care as the pandemic worsened.

This technology has proven to be advantageous. Patients no longer have to book appointments, take time off from work or spend time in the clinician's waiting room. Instead of scheduling appointments weeks in advance, they are now made just before the actual visit. The biggest advantage telehealth offers include diminished risk of contracting contagious illnesses at the clinic while limiting expensive and unnecessary Urgent Care and Emergency Room visits. According to The Olson Group, patients enrolled in a Direct Primary Care practice spend on average 30% fewer days admitted in hospitals. Furthermore, patients can renew their prescriptions easily and at their convenience, thereby simplifying chronic health care management. This is why companies like Teladoc and Amwell, which use telemedicine as their platforms, are thriving. Telehealth makes health care accessible and affordable.

As supported by Healthaffairs, millions have lost their jobs and health care insurance during this pandemic. To combat these issues, new ways to provide health care have emerged, which rely on telehealth as the medium to provide these services. One of the models that is gaining nationwide acceptance is Direct Primary Care, which provides affordable and accessible health care. In this model, the patient pays an affordable monthly fee directly to the physician, avoiding insurance and Big Pharma. In turn, their primary care physician provides patients with unlimited access, no wait time and extended appointments. Patients can access their physicians via call, text, or telemedicine. Patients also get wholesale pricing on most generic medications, labs and imaging. The savings from low overheads are then passed on to patients. Direct



**Aman Bassi**

He/Him

Sophomore  
Public Health

Primary Care practices cover most of the patients' primary care needs.

People who have no insurance, as well as those who are underinsured, benefit from this model too. Seniors and disabled patients who are homebound profit the most, as many can be unable to travel to their doctor's office. During the surge of Direct Primary Care practices throughout COVID-19, physicians have been able to make planned home visits, limiting travel and exposure to the virus. By bringing quality healthcare to patients' homes, a physician adds to value-based care and improves health outcomes.

Direct Primary Care not only helps the patients but also prevents physician burnouts. According to the American Medical Association, 42% of physicians face burnout. Direct Primary Care can stop this, and prevent physicians from being forced to see too many patients or fight with insurance companies to receive the money they are owed. In this model, physicians have smaller panel sizes and get to do what they like to do most: take care of their patients. Consistent primary care can reduce specialist referral (up to 62% according to The Olson Group), the need for hospitalization, as well as form strong doctor-patient relationships.

This model serves patients well too. Direct Primary Care is instrumental in reducing the cost of healthcare for the patient in an already stretched health care system. According to the Journal of The American Board of Family Medicine, the average patient spends hundreds to thousands of dollars (15 to 20%) less with Direct Primary Care as opposed to a traditional or concierge practice.

The pandemic brought to the forefront the weaknesses that were present in our healthcare system. It has forced an evolution in health care technology and delivery. What was supposed to be the future has become our present with the implementation of telemedicine in routine care and the delivery of healthcare in the form of Direct Primary Care. Both are gaining in popularity and are here to stay.



# OUR MISSION

We are already one, but we imagine that we are not. OneWorld exists to rediscover that, while we are many in our cultures, religions and struggles, we are one in our common humanity. We yearn to remove the barriers of ignorance and injustice, because the most basic and unchanging truth that unites us is the infinite value of the human person. OneWorld emphasizes this unity by raising awareness of social injustice, inspiring action and transforming our hearts, minds and society.

# THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

The support of OneWorld's sponsors ensures that our organization will continue to grow and become a more sustainable and meaningful community project. To inquire about supporting us next semester, please email [oneworldmagazine@slu.edu](mailto:oneworldmagazine@slu.edu).



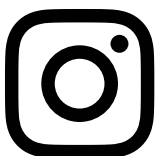
# CONNECT WITH ONEWORLD



[oneworldmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:oneworldmagazine@gmail.com)



[facebook.com/LiveOneWorld](https://facebook.com/LiveOneWorld)



[@oneworldmagazine](https://www.instagram.com/oneworldmagazine)



[oneworldmagazine.wixsite.com/website](https://oneworldmagazine.wixsite.com/website)



“I love America more than any other country in  
the world and, exactly for this reason, I insist on  
the right to criticize her perpetually”

- *James Baldwin*

